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*NAVAL ACTIONS*

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*AND*  
*OPERATIONS AGAINST CUBA AND*  
*PORTO RICO*  
*1593-1815*



# NAVAL ACTIONS

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OPERATIONS

AGAINST CUBA AND PORTO RICO

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AN ACCOUNT OF SOME  
PAST MILITARY AND NAVAL OPERATIONS  
DIRECTED AGAINST  
CUBA AND PUERTO RICO.

BY  
CAPTAIN C. H. STOCKTON, U. S. N.,  
PRESIDENT OF THE NAVAL WAR COLLEGE,  
1899-1900.

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## SAN JUAN DE PUERTO RICO.

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THE waters of the West Indies and Caribbean have been the battle-ground for various European nations for several centuries. Although not as rich in historic associations as the Mediterranean, to which it has not inaptly been compared, still the insular and isolated nature of the bordering countries of the Caribbean has caused the warfare of these countries to be very largely and primarily of a maritime nature. When the interoceanic canal is constructed, not only will the importance of these waters be magnified, but the latter-day similarity to the waters of the Mediterranean greatly increased.

The West Indies have been the nursery for great English seamen. Sir Francis Drake, Anson, Hawke, Rodney, Howe, Hood, St. Vincent, and Nelson all served and distinguished themselves in these latitudes. While the East Indies, and especially British India, have been the training-ground for English soldiers, the West Indies have served in the same manner to develop the English naval leaders of past centuries.<sup>1</sup> In our own history, the Perrys, both Porters, and Farragut spent much of their sea-lives in the West Indies and along the Spanish Main; and during the late war with Spain, the backbone of the sea-power of Spain was broken here by the admiral<sup>2</sup> who has lately become a dweller in this city.

It is not my intention to recount all of the operations, large and small, which have occurred in or about Cuba and

<sup>1</sup> Bacon, as far back as 1612, said that "The wealth of both Indies seems in great part but an accessory to the command of the seas."

<sup>2</sup> Rear-Admiral Wm. T. Sampson.

Puerto Rico, — countries now under the American flag and sovereignty, — but to recount the principal operations in times past against San Juan de Puerto Rico, Santiago de Cuba, and the city and port of Havana. It happens that these operations have been under the English flag, and carried on in the several wars between England and Spain during parts of the sixteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth centuries. In at least two of the expeditions, — that against Santiago in 1741, and the one against Havana in 1762, — there were also contingents from some of the English North American colonies now within the area of the United States. The first expedition, in point of time, was that against the capital of Puerto Rico, San Juan, in 1595.

On the 28th of August of that year, a fleet of twenty-seven vessels, under the joint command of Sir Francis Drake and Sir John Hawkins, left Plymouth, England, for the West Indies and Central America. With the expedition were land forces numbering 2,600, under the command of Colonel-General Sir Thomas Baskerville.

In the early days of the formation of the expedition, its objective point was the Isthmus of Panama; but shortly before the time of sailing the commanders learned that a Spanish treasure-ship, in a crippled condition, had put in for shelter to San Juan, and there, dismantled and disarmed, remained with two millions and a half of treasure in her hold from the rich mines of Mexico. Queen Elizabeth, who was interested financially in the expedition, ordered, that, if possible, the treasure-ship with her cargo should be captured.

The evils of the joint command under which this expedition was placed came very soon to the front. Sir John Hawkins carried his flag on the "Garland," and Sir Francis Drake, much younger in years, flew his flag on the "Defiance," while, according to the arrangement made before sailing, a council of war was to meet alternately

on these two ships, beginning on board that of the elder officer. Before reaching the coast of Spain a difficulty arose as to the first objective. Drake desired to begin with an attack upon the Canary Islands; but Hawkins thought such an attack unwise and inexpedient. Baskerville siding with Drake, the latter carried the day, but almost at the expense of an open rupture. The repulse that followed this attack upon the Canaries did not mend matters.

However, on the 29th of October, the fleet, with the exception of two small vessels, arrived at the island of Guadeloupe, in the West Indies. Unfortunately, five Spanish frigates, sent to bring home the delayed treasure in Puerto Rico, fell in with the two belated vessels, and capturing one and chasing the other until she joined the main body, discovered the position and force of the English fleet. Learning the destination of the fleet — by torture, it is said — from the captured vessel, the Spanish commander crowded all sail for Puerto Rico, to notify the authorities at San Juan of the coming of Hawkins and Drake.

Drake saw the disastrous result of this discovery and capture, and was anxious to get underway at once to pursue and attack the Spanish frigates. Hawkins, however, refused to consent, and Drake in vain urged upon his old kinsman the vital importance of rapid action. Hawkins was, however, sick and infirm, and Drake could not press him too far; so the fleet remained for refitting, and for the remounting of the guns stored below during the trans-Atlantic voyage.

When the fleet finally sailed, Drake delayed at the Virgin group to find a passage through, other than the one usually taken, and at whose outlet the lookout vessels of the Spaniards were then watching. A second channel being discovered by Drake in his own barge, known to this day

as Sir Francis Drake's Channel, between the islands of Virgin Gorda and Tortola, the expedition passed through in rear of the Spanish scouting-vessels, and finally came within sight of San Juan without the immediate knowledge of the authorities, although the arrival of the Spanish frigates had conveyed to them the general information as to the aim, strength, and earlier whereabouts of the expedition.

When, however, Drake and his fleet — soon to be his alone — arrived off San Juan, matters at this place were in a good state of preparation for defence. Don Pedro Tello, the "general" of the frigates, had been placed in charge of this defence. His troops had been already landed from the frigates to re-enforce the garrison; additional artillery had been mounted; and two large vessels, of which the dismantled treasure-ship was one, were sunk at the mouth of the harbor and a boom constructed upon them to complete the barrier. The treasure had, in the meantime, been placed in the citadel.

The English fleet was sighted at daybreak of the 12th of November from the city; and about this time Sir John Hawkins died, leaving Drake sole commander-in-chief. As the fleet came up, with the light morning breeze increasing in strength, a caravel was seen preceding it, with numerous small boats sounding and signalling the way.

As the chart shows, the city of San Juan is built upon a rocky promontory at the end of a long island, which shelters and makes the harbor and its connecting interior waters. This island, — almost a peninsula, — running in a general easterly and westerly direction, is separated by a small inlet known as the Boqueron, which has always been commanded by some fortification.

At the west end of this peninsula, by the rocky site of the old town, is the entrance to the harbor, at this point having a navigable channel of 500 yards only, but opening

out behind the town and promontory, and presenting a good harbor in depth and security for vessels of moderate draft of water.

Five years before the arrival of Drake, the place had been strongly fortified, and at the time was held to be one of the strongest ports in the West Indies. The entrance was commanded by the Morro Castle and the Rock battery and the usual town landing-place covered by Sta. Elena battery. To the eastward of the town were works known as the Morillo and Cabron, while the shore end was defended by the work at the Boqueron; and at the head of the causeway or bridge was placed Fort St. Antonio, a small work covering the only solid approach from the mainland to the island upon which the city was placed.

The defences at this time mounted seventy guns; and the garrison consisted of fifteen hundred Spanish regulars, besides a force of about eight thousand colonials capable of bearing arms.

Approaching from the eastward along the coast-line, the boats in advance of Drake's fleet, with their white flags showing a safe course, soon came under the fire of the Boqueron, and changing to colored flags at once stood off shore. The fleet, however, stood on by the Boqueron in close order, until it passed Escambron Point, when it came to anchor in a sandy bay to the eastward of the town.

The anchoring of the fleet at this place was a surprise to the Spaniards, who at once expected a landing from the ships. Unfortunately for the English, however, this sandy bay was covered by the shore batteries, which opened with a fire so hot that Drake had finally to weigh anchor and stand back to the eastward. He himself had his stool shot from under him by this fire, while two of his principal subordinates were mortally wounded. When the day

closed, the English fleet disappeared from the sight of the town, and those who knew not Drake thought the repulse a final one.

But the spirit of Drake's youth, in these his latter days, arose within him; and on the following daybreak the Spaniards saw the fleet to the westward of the entrance, standing towards that side of the harbor entrance, finally taking anchorage behind the two unfortified islands of Cabra and Cabrita, which then, as now, marked the western side of the entrance to the port. These islands masked Drake's vessels from the fire of the town batteries.

From this protected anchorage the Spanish frigates could be seen close under Sta. Elena battery, being so placed by Tello that if the worst came, the treasure in the citadel could be put on board and the ships take the sea. Drake determined upon a night attack by boats, with the unfortunate determination of firing the frigates one by one. The first one set on fire, however, so lighted up the neighborhood that the advantage of a night attack was lost, and the boats received the concentrated fire of the batteries on shore to such an extent that the attempt failed with great loss to the English.

Not dismayed yet, the next morning Drake got underway, and worked against the prevailing wind to the eastward for a favorable position off the entrance. Whatever the others thought, Tello, the commander of the defence, knew Drake of old, and recalled especially his former bold operations in the harbor of Cadiz. Suspecting that he would attempt to force the harbor entrance beyond the end of the boom, he sank two heavily laden merchantmen at its extremities; and when Drake finally headed directly for the entrance, he followed these by two more of his frigates, with their guns, stores, and equipment. Once more was Drake thwarted, and finding an entrance barred, came to anchor near the entrance, and called a council of



war to consider the question of a landing attack. Baskerville and the majority of the council being against the undertaking, Drake finally abandoned all further attempts on San Juan, and sailed away for the Spanish Main and the Isthmus of Panama, at which place he ended his career in the following January.

The best commentary upon Drake's attempts and failures is, perhaps, the narrative of the Earl of Cumberland's more successful attack upon the same place a few years afterwards.

George Clifford, Earl of Cumberland, was one of those distinguished adventurers of the Elizabethan era, who, though not without hope and desire for gain, seems to have been actuated quite as much from a chivalrous love of adventure as from any other motive. His social position and ample personal wealth gave him a standing which enabled him to introduce good order and discipline among his followers in the various enterprises initiated by him, and caused his attack upon San Juan to be considered then and now, "as a fine, orderly operation of war conducted with no less humanity than gallantry."

The expedition with which we are now concerned was the tenth and last that the Earl of Cumberland had formed, and was accompanied by the earl in person, as admiral and commander-in-chief. Sailing from England on the 6th of March, 1598, with a force of twenty vessels of all sorts, he had for his flagship the famous "Scourge of Malice," christened by Queen Elizabeth herself, and ranking, with its eight hundred tons, among the very first vessels of the day. His second in command, styled "Lieutenant-General and Vice-Admiral," Sir John Berkeley, carried his flag on the "Merchant Royal." As a whole, his force was more formidable, it was said, than any that had heretofore been assembled by a subject of the kingdom.

Arriving at the Canaries, Cumberland took and plundered the island of Lanzarote, and then pushed across for the West Indies, arriving at the island of Dominica on the 23d of May. Leaving there on the 1st of June, the expedition proceeded to the Virgin Islands, where the landing-parties were organized and drilled.

Leaving the Virgin group, the fleet made the eastern end of Puerto Rico, and coasted along the north shore of the island until the vicinity of San Juan was reached. The sea being calm, a force of about one thousand men was landed on the beach to the eastward of the town and island of San Juan, observed only by a small group of Spanish horsemen.

A day's march, after landing, brought the English to the inlet already spoken of as the Boqueron, and to a halt, as boats were wanting to cross to the island. At this time, the defences of San Juan were much the same as at the time of the previous attack; but the garrison which Drake encountered and Tello commanded was stronger than the one which Cumberland had to deal with. By the disappearance of the Spanish horse, Cumberland was led to suspect another approach to the town; and through the aid of a negro guide discovered the causeway which connected the southeast end of the island of San Antonio with the mainland which was covered then, as now, by the small fort at San Antonio. Cumberland gave his men a few hours' rest after darkness had set in, and they all slept in their armor on the bare ground. Before daybreak, the attack was made under the leadership of Sir John Berkeley. The causeway was rough, and the Spaniards were upon the alert, and opened such a hot fire that the English were compelled to withdraw at daylight, with a loss of fifty men.

It was on account of the persistent requests of his subordinates, that the Earl of Cumberland had resigned

the leadership of this assault to his second in command ; but history tells of his part in the matter. He could not keep out of the fight, and stumbling along the causeway in the dark, he was thrown off his feet, and pushed by accident into the shoal water. Falling on his back, and encumbered with his armor, he could not get up, and would have been drowned had he not been fished up, after some delay, by two of his men. When finally rescued, he had swallowed so much salt water as to be very sick, and was obliged, most unheroically, to spend the remainder of the night, in a state of complete exhaustion, sitting by the side of the causeway.

The next attack was made upon the fort at the Boqueron, now known as San Gerónimo, by the combined force. One of the vessels of the fleet was brought close under the guns of this fort. To do this she had to be grounded in front of the fort ; but the sacrifice of the ship was thought to be justified by the results, and the fort was reduced to ruins. The assaulting party effected a landing across the Boqueron, and after a march of a mile (the town was smaller in those days) the town was reached, and found to be deserted by all of the population capable of bearing arms, who had repaired to the Morro. This castle was finally taken, and, with the town and the rest of the defences, came into possession of the English.

It was Cumberland's original intention to retain possession of San Juan as an English colony ; but climatic diseases, principally of the nature of yellow fever, so reduced his command that he returned to England, leaving Sir John Berkeley in charge ; and then Berkeley followed, joining his admiral while still upon his homeward route.

A later and unsuccessful attack was made upon San Juan, in 1797, by a combined expedition under Rear-Admiral Henry Harvey and Lieutenant-General Ralph

Abercrombie. The defences of San Juan had been increased — by the fort and lines of San Cristobal — and the attack by shore and sea, principally by bombardment, was so ineffective, and the assaults so unsuccessful, that Abercrombie re-embarked with his force on the 30th of April, after a loss of two hundred and twenty-five killed, wounded, and missing.

## SANTIAGO DE CUBA.

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IN 1741 an expedition was formed in Jamaica to attempt the capture of *Santiago de Cuba*. It consisted of a fleet of 8 ships-of-the-line, 1 of 50 guns, 12 frigates, some small craft, and about 40 transports. This fleet, under the command of Vice-Admiral Vernon, had Rear-Admiral Sir Chaloner Ogle as second in command. The land forces, numbering about 3,400 men, were under the command of General Thomas Wentworth. With this land force were some remnants of the American regiment, originally numbering 2,500 men. One of the Washingtons accompanied this expedition, and Mount Vernon owes its name to that of the naval commander-in-chief of this expedition.

Guantanamo Bay was selected as the general rendezvous of the expedition; and by the 18th of July the vessels had assembled in that bay, which was named by Vernon "Cumberland Harbor," after the second son of the then reigning monarch, George II.

Guantanamo Bay, which is one of the best and most secure bays in Cuba and the West Indies, is, as you know, about forty miles from the entrance to the harbor of Santiago. It is divided into a shallow upper bay, and a fine deep-water anchorage in its lower part. Upon the arrival of the expedition, which took possession of the bay without opposition, the smaller ships of war and transports were sent up the harbor as far as the depth of water permitted.

The usual council of war was held upon the day after that of the arrival of the expedition, and concluding from

the best information available, as well as from a naval reconnoissance, that a direct attack upon Santiago from the sea was impracticable, the entrance being also closed by a substantial boom, decided upon an attack overland from Guantanamo Bay.

The land forces, consequently, disembarked and encamped at the mouth of the Rio Guasco, about three leagues from the entrance to the harbor; and a detachment of 150 Americans and negroes, under Major Gunster, advanced into the interior as far as the village of Elleguava, where it remained for some time, until, for want of support, it fell back to the main encampment.

There was at this time assembled in Havana Harbor a Spanish fleet consisting of twelve ships-of-the-line, which constituted an active fleet in being, and required the attention of Vernon. He sent consequently some of his faster cruisers to watch Havana Harbor, with others he blockaded Santiago, while with six of his largest vessels he formed a line across the wide entrance to Guantanamo Bay, to cover the transports anchored within.

Santiago was not over four days' march from Guantanamo Bay, and was almost defenceless on the land side. There was no force of any size to oppose the English troops, but Wentworth did not advance from his encampment. The country was thickly wooded, it is true, and great difficulty would have been found in dragging the guns overland; but still it was practicable to have made the march with troops lightly equipped. With the delay came sickness, and also a letter from General Wentworth to the admiral expressed his doubts as to whether he could either advance farther or subsist his forces much longer in the part they possessed.

The vice-admiral made a reconnoissance, in person, of the entrance and outer works of the harbor, and found little hope of capturing the port from the sea. Councils

of war followed each other in quick succession ; and finally, mutually discouraged, the troops were ordered to be re-embarked on the 20th of November, and the fleet returned to Jamaica.

This campaign has been severely, and not unjustly, criticised: first, because the attempt was made upon Santiago rather than upon the more important city of Havana, where the enemy's fleet was lying ; secondly, because the Spanish fleet in Havana was not masked by the entire force of Vernon ; and thirdly, because General Wentworth remained inactive for about three months within less than sixty miles by land from their objective. There seems to be little doubt that more men were sacrificed by delay in that sickly climate than would have been lost by active operations.

The conquest of Cuba seems to have been the earnest desire of the English ministry at that time ; for, as late as the 23d of September, 1741, Governor Shirley of Boston made a speech inviting New England settlers to go to Cuba, and promising grants of land to intending settlers. This seems to have been the first of the movements (bordering upon filibustering) towards Cuba from North America.

One of the great evils of this expedition was a want of harmony and co-operation between the army and navy, especially between the two leaders. On the 31st of October the Duke of New Castle wrote to Vice-Admiral Vernon as follows:

“ His Majesty has commanded me to acquaint you and General Wentworth that he sees with great concern the heats and animosities that have arisen between his officers by sea and land, contrary to his orders, whereby the service cannot but greatly suffer ; and I am ordered to recommend to you in the strongest manner carefully to avoid the like for the future, and that in case of any difference of

opinion all venomy and warmth of expression should be avoided."

In 1748 a naval attack was attempted upon Santiago de Cuba by a fleet under the command of Rear-Admiral Sir Charles Knowles. The entrance of the harbor was again closed by a boom, backed by vessels held ready for use as fireships. The defences had been strengthened since 1742, and the Spaniards were aware of the intended attack. The nearest forts were cannonaded by the English, and the fire was returned. The leading ship, finding that it was impracticable to proceed, withdrew, and so reported to the admiral, who finally gave up the attempt, and returned to Jamaica.



## THE SIEGE AND CAPTURE OF HAVANA IN 1762.

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IN January, 1762, war was declared by England against the kingdom of Spain; and the existing ministry of Great Britain found themselves obliged to adopt the plans for the war formulated by the elder Pitt, who had shortly before resigned from the ministry, of which he had been premier.

The plan adopted included a campaign in the West Indies, with the settlements of the Spanish in that region as objectives. Havana was the main objective, being then the centre of their continental trade and the key to their American possessions.

The Earl of Albemarle was selected for the chief command of the land forces; and Sir George Pocock, Admiral of the Blue, was appointed to command the fleet; while Commodore Augustus Keppel, brother of the Earl of Albemarle, was appointed second in command, and placed in immediate charge of the fitting out of the force in England.

The British ministry lacked the impelling genius of Pitt, and the sailing of the expedition from England was unnecessarily delayed until the 5th of March. This delay caused the principal operations to take place in the summer, and might easily have caused the siege to last until the hurricane season, so dangerous to the sailing-ships of that day on a shore like that found near the entrance to the harbor of Havana.

The army was to consist of 16,000 men, but of these

but 4,000 were to sail with the commander-in-chief from England. 8,000 were to join in the West Indies, and 4,000 were to be furnished from America by Sir Jeffrey Amherst, then stationed at New York. 2,000 of these last were to be colonists or provincials, to be raised by General Amherst from the colonies of New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island, with a quota from each according to the population.

Sir George Pocock sailed with but five line-of-battle ships; the remainder of his naval force was to be constituted from the forces of Admiral Rodney, and from a squadron under Captain Harvey, both then in West Indian waters.

Upon the arrival of the fleet at Barbadoes, Admiral Pocock, hearing of the capture of Martinique by the combined forces of General Monckton and Admiral Rodney, repaired to that place. The news of the capture of Fort Royal in this island had been taken home by Major Gates, the senior aide-de-camp of General Monckton. Gates afterwards came to greater celebrity during our Revolutionary war as the general in command at Saratoga.

By the combination effected at Martinique, the army amounted to over eleven thousand men, and the fleet to forty vessels of war of all classes, with one hundred and fifty-six storeships and transports. Admiral Pocock carried his flag on the "Namur" of ninety guns, and Commodore Keppel on the "Valiant," a seventy-four.

Sailing from Martinique on the 6th of May, and joined off St. Nicholas Mole by the Jamaica contingent, two routes to Havana presented themselves to the admiral: one, the ordinary and most secure route, along the southern side of Cuba; and the other, on the north side of Cuba, little known, unmarked by any aids to navigation, and bordered by dangerous shoals, by what is now known as the Old Bahama Channel, in length about six hundred

miles. During our late war, an accommodating enemy kept this channel lighted on the Cuban side, while the neutral government of the Colony of Bahamas marked in the same way the northern edge.

As celerity was essential to the success of the enterprise, the admiral chose the Old Bahama Channel as the more speedy, even though more hazardous route.

To keep the formation compact and well within control, the combined fleet was formed in seven divisions, and with, as a principal guide, an old chart of Lord Anson, beacon lights and ships were placed upon the principal cays and shoals for the day and night passage. While in this channel two Spanish vessels of war were captured, but a schooner escaping at the same time carried to the Governor of Havana the news of the approaching fleet and threatened attack for the first time.

The composition of this large fleet, as it passed through the Old Bahama Channel in a direction opposite to that taken by our own Santiago expedition through the same channel, is interesting and worthy of mention. The expedition sailed in a formation of seven divisions and in three columns. The van division consisted of five men-of-war, Sir George Pocock leading in the centre with his flag on the "Namur." The flanking columns were also men-of-war, the rear being brought up by the vessels of the fleet. The central column consisted of transports and storeships, hospital and artillery ships, two ships with negroes from Jamaica, — some brought as slaves, and some loaned by the colony, — four ships with fascines, three with horses only, and six with the baggage of the general officers. During the delay at Martinique the men had been employed in cutting wood for fascines, the soil in the vicinity of Havana being very thin.

The land forces had been divided into five brigades ; and exclusive of the re-enforcements which came later from

New York under Brigadier-General Burton, and the detachments from Jamaica, amounted in round numbers to 12,000 men. Among the officers of these forces, whose names became known afterwards in our Revolutionary War, were the adjutant-general, Colonel William Howe, and the quartermaster-general, Colonel Guy Carleton.

The expedition had fine weather in passing along the north side of Cuba, and on the evening of the 5th of June, 1762, cleared the channel and sighted Matanzas. On the 6th the fleet hove to about five leagues to the eastward of Havana, to make the necessary preparations for landing. Commodore Keppel was appointed to take charge of the landing operations, having assigned to him six ships-of-the-line and some frigates; the flat-bottomed boats to be used for landing the troops being manned by men from the fleet. The admiral here parted company from the rest of the expedition, and taking thirteen ships-of-the-line, two frigates, the bombketches, and thirty-six storeships, ran down off the harbor, sighting inside twelve Spanish ships-of-the-line. The next morning the admiral embarked the marines in boats, and made a feint of landing about four miles to the westward of Havana. About the same time the Earl of Albemarle landed with the whole army between the small rivers of Bocanao and Cojimar, about six miles to the eastward of Morro Castle. The army landed in three divisions, in command of Lieutenant-General Elliot, Major-General Keppel, and Brigadier-General Howe; Lord Albemarle going ashore in the barge of the "Valiant" with Commodore Keppel.

While the disembarkation was going on, the enemy made a show of resistance, but they were soon put to flight by a fire from two of the ships. A larger force making their appearance, they were also dispersed, and the small redoubt at the mouth of the Cojimar River silenced by Captain Harvey in the "Dragon," and the army landed without further disturbance.

The greater part of the Spanish infantry and all of their cavalry took post at the village of Guanabacoa, in order to prevent the British forces from getting around the head of the harbor and thus attacking the city on the west side. This force was dislodged by the advance of the British, and the village and grounds about Guanabacoa held under General Elliot from thenceforth, covering the besieging parties from attacks from inland.

On the 10th Lord Albemarle, wishing to occupy the hill of the Cabañas, then surmounted only by a small redoubt, had a feint made upon the fort at the Chorera, which diverted the Spaniards so that the castle at Chorera was abandoned, and the ridge of the Cabañas was carried with very little loss.

As the chief fortification of Havana and of its harbor entrance at that time was Morro Castle, the principal attack was directed against this work, the operations being placed in charge of Major-General Keppel by his brother, the commander-in-chief.

The garrison of Havana consisted of 810 cavalry, 3,800 infantry and artillery, and 9,000 sailors and marines belonging to the fleet, making the number of the regular forces over 13,000; to these were added 14,000 militia and people of color, making a total force of 27,610 men of all arms and kinds.

Morro Castle being of the greatest consequence, was, on account of the scarcity of regular artillery, garrisoned by and given in charge of the navy, under the command of Don Luis de Velasco, captain of the "Reyno," ship of war. All of the English historians agree in stating that he discharged this important trust with a courage and fidelity that has rendered his name immortal. The Marquis de Gonzales, captain of the "Aquilon," ship of war, was appointed second in command, and proved to be worthy of his chief.

On the 8th of June the Spaniards sunk one of their largest ships in the narrow entrance of the harbor, and on the 9th a second ship was sunk at the entrance, and a boom was placed across the mouth of the harbor. At a still later date, the harbor was completely closed by the sinking of a third vessel. This, of course, practically threw out of action the entire Spanish fleet, which was not so far in excess in numbers of vessels of the line to the English fleet.

I cannot do better than repeat and coincide with the comment made upon this policy by a writer of those days, who said, "Though the issue of a naval battle might have proved unfavorable to the Spaniards, yet a battle tolerably maintained would have much disabled our armament and perhaps been a means of preventing the success of the whole enterprise. The loss of their fleet in this way might possibly have saved the city; but the city once taken, nothing could possibly save the fleet."

The main battery, constructed in the siege of Morro Castle, was placed as near as the cover of the surrounding woods permitted, and at a distance only of 250 yards. The soil was so thin that it was with great difficulty that the besieging parties could cover themselves in their approaches, and the battery had to be erected of wood and other inflammable material, such as old rope cables from the ships, and bales of cotton brought from Jamaica. The supply of water was also scarce and brought from a distance, and later in the siege recourse was had entirely to water from the ships.

In addition to the battery bearing on the Morro, another battery of howitzers, on the Cabañas, was erected to bear upon the ships in the harbor, to stop their fire upon the men working in the approaches. This eventually caused the removal of the Spanish fleet to the upper end of the harbor. On the 13th of June an actual landing

was made at Chorera, to the west of Havana, by grenadiers and light infantry under Colonel Howe of "Brandywine" fame, to which was added a force of marines from the fleet. This engaged the attention of the enemy to that side, and it was off this part of the shore that the main body of the English fleet remained at anchor.

It was not until the 29th of June that the batteries were ready to open fire upon the Morro and the shipping. Early on this day, however, an attack was made upon the British position, on the Cabañas, by a large detachment from the city, which had landed near the Morro. This attack was repulsed with great loss to the Spaniards.

On the 1st of July a combined attack was made upon the Morro by sea and land. The shore batteries of guns, mortars, and "royals" opened fire from four positions, while the H. M. ships "Cambridge," "Dragon," and "Marlborough," under Captain Harvey as senior officer, took position close to the shore, and opened fire at the Morro at 8 A.M. This was continued until 2 P.M., when the ships were obliged to haul off. The "Cambridge," which was within *grapeshot* distance, had lost her captain, 24 men killed and 95 wounded, while the losses on the other ships brought up the total casualties to 42 men killed and 140 wounded. The position of the Morro on a high and steep rock gave a plunging fire upon the ships, to which was added the cross-fire from the Punta and other batteries on the town side. The fire from the ships, however, proved of assistance in relieving the fire upon the land-works. The "Stirling Castle" was ordered to lead until the first ship was properly placed, and then to make sail off; but this was done so badly that after the siege the captain was court-martialed and cashiered for his action.

The fire of the land-batteries continued on the 2d and 3d of July; but on the latter day the principal battery, before mentioned, caught on fire and was entirely destroyed.

By this time the climate began to tell on the troops, and no less than 5,000 soldiers and 3,000 seamen were down with various complaints.

The mistake of erecting the main batteries too near to the Morro was remedied in the erection of the new batteries, which were placed at double the distance. Fire was continuous from these batteries, one of which was again destroyed by fire, and the sappers and miners approached the walls of the fort, though much hindered by a ditch seventy feet from the edge of the counterscarp, upwards of forty feet of that depth being sunk in the rock. Fortunately there was a thin edge of the rock left to cover the extremity of the ditch from the sea, and by means of this ridge the miners passed with difficulty to the foot of the wall.

On the 21st of July it became evident to the Spaniards that unless something effective was soon done the Morro would fall; the governor determined to make an attack upon the besieging works on the Cabañas, the key of the position, and driving out the English, destroy them by fire. Had this succeeded, with the sickly condition of the troops and the delay in the arrival of the North American contingent, there is little doubt that the siege would have been raised. The attacking party came from the town, landed on the Cabañas side, and began the attack at four in the morning. This attack was repulsed with heavy loss, Colonel Sir Guy Carleton, Brigadier of the day, who was wounded, receiving great credit for his active services in the repulse.

On the 28th of July Brigadier-General Burton arrived with the first division of the troops from North America, which had sailed from New York on the 11th of June; but on the 24th of July five vessels of this expedition were wrecked at the mouth of the Bahama Straits.

On the 30th of July the mines under the walls of



Morro were fired, making a breach which was considered practicable, and an assault was ordered. Don Luis de Velasco defended his charge to the last, and, in endeavoring to rally his men, was mortally wounded while coming up the slope to the rampart. In such esteem did the king of Spain hold this brave officer and his brave defence that he not only ennobled his son (Viscount de Moro), but also ordered that there should always be a ship in the Spanish navy named "Velasco." The last vessel to hold that name continuously in the Spanish navy was captured by the fleet under Admiral Dewey at Manila, on the 1st of May, 1898.

Marquis Gonzales, the second in command, was also killed in the assault, which was successful after great loss to the garrison. The possession of this fort cost 44 days of hard labor from the time of the first operations, during which time the Spaniards lost 1,000 men. The Morro, with the neighboring works, mounted alone 154 guns and 11 mortars.

On the 31st of July, and the 1st and 2d of August, the Spanish opened a heavy fire from the north side upon the Morro, and sent down a 70-gun ship into the entrance, and moved her opposite the Morro, to assist in the cannonading.

On the 2d of August the second division of transports, which sailed from New York on the 30th of June, arrived off Havana. This force, with the previous arrivals, was ordered to the west side of the entrance, where direct operations upon the town were proposed. These troops included 2,000 provincials from New York, New Jersey, Connecticut, and Rhode Island. In the first detachment, among others, was Israel Putnam, then a Lieutenant-Colonel of the Connecticut Provincial Regiment, while in the other detachment many names are found who served in the Revolutionary War. Part of the second detachment, including 150 provincials, was captured by a French naval force on the 21st

of July. As the New York detachments arrived so late in the siege, their loss from casualties was small, being but seven killed and wounded, but the losses by disease were very great.

From the fall of the Morro until the 13th of August, batteries were established on the west side of the entrance and the fort on the Punta silenced.

Finally, on the 13th of August, the capitulation of the city and fleet was agreed upon and duly signed.

By the capture and destruction of the vessels in Havana Spain was deprived of nearly one-fifth of her whole navy, while in prize-money the English army and navy acquired an amount of three millions sterling, the Earl of Albemarle and Sir George Pocock each receiving nearly one hundred and twenty-three thousand pounds, while the proportion of each enlisted man and private was less than three pounds a piece.

The great disproportion between the prize money of the superior officers and the men in the navy was a source of discontent in the service, and one of the grievances that in later days caused the mutinies in the Napoleonic wars.

Apropos of this an old anecdote was told in these times of a sailor who, previous to an engagement, was seen by a lieutenant to be, as he thought, hiding behind the gun. "You are funkling, sir," said the officer. "No, I am not," said the seaman, "I am praying." "Praying, sir! What are you praying for?" inquired the officer. "Why, sir," said the sailor, "I'm praying that the enemy's bullets will be served out like the prize money — that most will go to the officers."

The harmony and unity existing between the land and naval forces at the siege of Havana contributed greatly to the success of the undertaking, and sets an example not to be ignored to the present day and to our own country and services.

The Earl of Albemarle in his report stated that "Sir George Pocock and Commodore Keppel have exerted themselves in a most particular manner, and I may venture to say that never was a joint undertaking carried on with more harmony and zeal on both sides," while Vice-Admiral Pocock wrote: "It will be as needless, as almost impossible, for me to express or describe that perfect harmony that has uninterruptedly subsisted between the fleet and army from our first setting out. Indeed, it is doing injustice to both to maintain them as two corps, since each has endeavored with the most constant and cheerful emulation to render it but one."

In concluding the account of this siege, let me quote from the biographer of Commodore Keppel, who says that:

"Never, in this or any preceding war, had so valuable and important a conquest been achieved; but dreadful were the sufferings and great the mortality attending it. By Lord Albemarle's official return, on his leaving the Havannah, of the casualties of the army from the 7th of June until the 8th of October it appears that 560 men were killed or had died of their wounds, and 4708 had perished from sickness."

Out of the six operations mentioned in this paper by the English against San Juan, Santiago de Cuba, and Havana, but two were entirely successful, so that a comparison with our own late war in Cuba and Puerto Rico is not to our disadvantage. But I trust that there are other teachings in such historical accounts than that of self-congratulation. The obligations that have arisen with our new dependencies are greater than any strength that arises from them, and it is well to study the questions that will arise for their maintenance and defence. History, now and ever, teaches us by example, as much in the military as in political art. As Prince Bismarck once

said in his blunt way, "Fools say that you can only gain experience at your own expense, but *I* have always contrived to gain my experience at the expense of others." To this remark let me add one of a French writer, that "Peace is the dream of the wise; war is the history of man."

# THE NAVAL SIDE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

BY

CAPTAIN CASPER F. GOODRICH, U. S. N.

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## THE NAVAL SIDE OF THE REVOLUTIONARY WAR.

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It is not my purpose to recount in detail the naval episodes of the War of the American Revolution, although all are interesting and many thrilling. This work has been too often done by abler hands than mine to call for, or to admit of, repetition. The pages of James Fenimore Cooper, for example, are a guide to these events whose trustworthiness is beyond question and above praise.

In reading the history of this struggle, great in itself and greater still in its consequences to mankind, having in view the obtaining of lessons appropriate to our present needs, I have been much impressed by the absence of those broad generalizations which, alone, bring benefit to the student, illuminating his path with the lamp of experience. The lamp has always been burning, giving forth its rays in every direction with lavish generosity ; but so far as I am aware there has been lacking that accurate synthesis which, placing the facts in their true relation to each other, should serve as a lens to bring the rays of light together into one powerful and searching beam. I cannot pretend to have found this lens myself ; but, at least, certain deductions from these events have suggested themselves to me as worthy of consideration, if not of acceptance, and to them I ask your attention for a brief hour.

The war in question was a naval war to an extent seldom fully realized and never generally acknowledged. That the war would assume this phase might have been

expected on *a priori* grounds. England was waging hostilities at a distance of some three thousand miles from home. For the maintenance of communication between her troops in America and their base in Great Britain, the command of the sea was an imperative necessity. Let that be lost, and her armies in the colonies would infallibly perish; for military stores were not to be had in the theatre of operations, and other supplies were often difficult to obtain in the midst of a population, for the greater part, intensely inimical. Again, the colonists, settled principally along the seaboard, had been engaged in maritime pursuits to a degree which, proportionally, has not been surpassed in our history. As fishermen and sailors their numbers were relatively vast. Their enterprise and skill brought, indeed, so serious a menace to England's commercial supremacy on the water that, among their grievances, were measures which sought to restrict this energetic competition with the mother country. As a natural sequence, these men of nautical bent and experience found an appropriate field for activity in attacks on British transports and British merchantmen, provoking, in return, a large display of British naval force. The numbers engaged in these operations afloat were so much greater than those under arms ashore that the latter appear by comparison almost insignificant.

In actual organized collision between the king's forces and the colonists, the first blood was shed on the water, in the *Gaspee* incident of 1772. It was also a naval movement which brought the war to a close; for without the help of the French fleet, Washington and Lafayette could not have compelled the surrender of Cornwallis, the last important scene in the military drama. Surely these facts justify our looking at this war from the naval standpoint, and absolve me from the need of further apology for inviting you to listen once more to a twice-told tale.



The occasion of the *Gaspee* episode was the attempted enforcement of the odious navigation act by British armed vessels, charged with the duty of seeing that all colonial craft were provided with the stamps made requisite under the law. On June 9th, 1772, the *Hannah*, Captain Linzee, a packet plying between New York and Providence, refused to come, for examination, alongside a British cruiser in Narragansett Bay, but, profiting by a fresh and favoring breeze, she ran off and stood up the bay. The sloop *Gaspee* of 102 tons, mounting four or six 3-pdrs., a small armed tender to the cruiser, was signalled to chase. Captain Linzee, familiar with the local navigation, led the *Gaspee* over a shoal where, drawing more water than the *Hannah*, the former struck, while the latter escaped to Providence. Captain Linzee's account of the matter so incensed the inhabitants of that town that they planned and fitted out an expedition to avenge the fancied outrage. Sixty-four men disguised as Indians and led, it is believed, by Captain Abraham Whipple, later one of the first captains to be commissioned in the United States Navy, dropped down the river that night in eight boats provided with cobble stones as missiles. At 2 A.M. they reached the stranded *Gaspee*. They were hailed by the sentry, who received a volley of stones in reply. He rushed below to arouse his mates. Lieutenant Dudingstone in command came on deck, and fired a pistol at the boats. He was wounded in the thigh by a musket-ball discharged in return. The *Gaspee* was carried by boarding, and Dudingstone was further injured by a sabre cut that nearly severed his right hand from the wrist. The *Gaspee's* people were removed and the vessel set on fire. Towards morning she blew up. A reward of a thousand pounds sterling for the leader and one of five hundred pounds for any of the others in this party were offered in vain by the British government. Nor were the labors of

a royal commission, that sat from January till June of the following year, attended by better results. The loyalty of the colonists to each other was proof against all temptation. The affair may, with propriety, be deemed the opening act of the hostilities between England and her American possessions. Preceding Lexington by nearly three years, it has been lost sight of in the latter's greater renown—a renown based upon the larger numbers engaged, upon a notable loss of life on both sides, and upon the stirring events to which it was the immediate prelude. I have thought it not improper to describe the taking of the *Gaspee* at some length, and to claim for the enterprise its due place in the order of events.

From a military point of view, the position of England on the continent of North America from 1775 to 1782 was alternately offensive and defensive; offensive so long as her command of the sea was practically unchallenged or undisturbed, defensive the moment her communications were seriously threatened or were interrupted. It is these varying phases, presented by the military situation, which so complicate the general question, and render difficult a right understanding of the British campaign as a whole. Yet it is evident that just so long as she could safely play the part of aggressor, her advance was, on the whole, not measurably checked. When her sea communications were endangered, the movements of her troops became retrograde at once. Thus in 1776, the continual interception of its supplies by American cruisers was of little, if any, less weight in forcing the British army to evacuate Boston than the increasing pressure of the besieging Americans. Again, in 1778, it was not Washington's army but the sailing of d'Estaing's fleet from Toulon that drove Clinton out of Philadelphia and back upon his local base in New York. A year later, the mere news that d'Estaing was coming to America was sufficient to

cause the precipitate abandonment of Rhode Island by the British.

Arguing from these facts, it becomes at least conceivable that measures directed towards naval control of the coast on our part might have materially shortened the war.

The steps taken by the colonists to prosecute hostilities on the water reflected the lack of organization existing at the seat of the new government. There were privateers, cruisers equipped by individual colonies, and national cruisers. These vessels acted in concert or independently according to circumstances. Similarly, officers of the regular navy are found serving in each class, passing from one to the other as the occasion demanded. A distressing absence of homogeneity is noticeable throughout all the American operations. If the word were permissible, amateurish would appear to be that best adapted to characterize them. Let us review briefly the services performed by each of the above mentioned varieties of ships.

The old and ever new *ignis fatuus* of commerce destroying shed its baleful light over the colonists, luring them on to a false policy. As a subordinate adjunct, prosecuted with a surplus of ships and men, and so controlled as to help and not hinder regular hostilities, commerce destroying is always useful, while at times important. But when, as in the War of the American Revolution, it cripples the crews of national vessels and through frequent capture by the enemy followed by non-exchange of prisoners, it gradually decimates the sea-faring population; when it assumes a magnitude out of all proportion to the more capital operations of the marine,—it becomes an evil but slightly, if at all, mitigated by the distress inflicted on the foe. Wars are brought to a conclusion by the defeat of armies and squadrons, not by guerillas, however successful, either afloat or ashore. The damage

done to our commerce by the Confederate cruisers in the War of the Rebellion, vast as it was, had absolutely no effect on the issue of the contest. This lesson has never been learned by our people, yet it is as true to-day as it was thirty-five or even one hundred and twenty years ago.

Hutchinson in his diary states his belief that seventy thousand New Englanders were engaged in privateering at one time. According to Edward Everett Hale, the privateer fleet of the port of Salem, in 1781, consisted of fifty-nine vessels, which carried nearly four thousand men, averaging sixty-six men to the ship, and mounted seven hundred and forty-six guns. There seems to be no means of making an exact computation of the magnitude of the privateer fleet at any one moment, but a partial list in the Massachusetts archives of those commissioned in that State gives the names of two hundred and seventy vessels. The privateer fleets from Rhode Island, Connecticut, and Philadelphia were also large. Salem is known to have sent out one hundred and fifty privateers, and Boston three hundred and sixty-five. It would probably be fair to say that during the war more than six hundred privateers were commissioned by Massachusetts alone. "The largest of these privateers," says Mr. Hale,<sup>1</sup> "at starting, carried one hundred and fifty men. With each prize sent in, the fighting force of the captor was reduced; and in such reduction is the reason to be found why at last a privateer captain was not able to fight his own ship and, after he had sent in many prizes, was himself taken. On the other hand, the smallest of these vessels, equipped for short cruises, carried but few guns and few men."

I have been unable to gather statistics as to the number of privateers sailing from the Delaware, from Southern waters or from France.

<sup>1</sup> E. E. Hale in *Crit. and Narr. Hist. America*.

That an amount of injury commensurate with this display of force was dealt to English transports and merchantmen is conceded. Almon's Remembrancer records three hundred and forty-two sail of English vessels taken by American cruisers of all kinds in 1776. In the following year, four hundred and sixty-seven were captured, some of them of great value. In the single month of May, 1779, eighteen prizes were brought into the port of New London. In 1780 the Admiralty court of the Essex district of Massachusetts had condemned eight hundred and eighteen prizes. Of this period Cooper says, "Many American privateers fell into their (British) hands, and a scarcity of men began to be felt in consequence of the numbers that were detained in English prisons."

Not the least of the bad results of privateering on such a large scale was the difficulty of obtaining crews for the national ships, the naval service holding out fewer and less specious attractions to recruits than did the privateer with its short trips, lax discipline, and chances of greater gain. This difficulty, by the way, is likely to recur with a renewal of the conditions which gave it birth.

The privateers were an excellent school of seamanship and battle. It would ill become us at this day to withhold our tribute of praise for their brave deeds, however much we may regret the misapplication of their valuable powers.

Such achievements as the surrender of the *Governor Tryon*, 16, and *Sir Wm. Erskine*, 18, to the American privateer *Thorn*, 16, Captain Daniel Waters, should not be forgotten. True, the *Tryon* managed to escape while Waters was securing the *Erskine*; but this mishap was partially repaired a few days later, when on his way to Boston he captured the *Sparlin*, 18, bringing in the two prizes which he had apparently set his heart upon taking.

In like manner, Captain Manly, of the *Jason*, — probably of 20 guns, — being attacked by two English privateers, one of 16 and the other of 18 guns, boldly ran between them and captured them both. Nor is the action on September 6th, 1781, between the *Congress*, 20, Captain Geddes, and H. B. M. sloop-of-war *Savage*, 16, Captain Sterling, less notable. The heavier ship won the fight, but she had to contend against the man-of-war's superior drill and discipline, consequent upon an already long commission. The privateer's crew were raw and untrained, the vessel being just out of port. An aptitude for such work combined with zeal and intrepidity to make their superior weight of metal effective. Our time is too limited to recall other equally gallant encounters in which American privateers gained honorable laurels, even if they came fairly within the scope of this study.

The colonial navies were not insignificant in numbers at least, though many of the vessels under this head were small and weak. The navy of Massachusetts comprised thirty-four craft from the beginning to the end of the war. As early as February 16th, 1776, South Carolina had a ship of 26 guns, a brig of 18 guns, and a schooner of 12 guns. Others were added later. Among them was the *South Carolina*, borrowed from the King of France, much the heaviest ship that ever sailed under the American flag until the frigates of 1794 were built. Connecticut, Rhode Island and Pennsylvania also commissioned armed vessels. Virginia's navy appears to have consisted of small light-draught boats suitable for operating in the waters tributary to Chesapeake Bay. Beatson mentions the scuttling or burning in the James River in March, 1781, of the *Tempest*, 20, *Renown*, 26, and *Jefferson*, 14, "state-ships." These probably belonged to Virginia. I am not able to give numbers with any possible approach to accuracy, but it may be assumed

that not less than sixty were in active service at one time or another.

The work of these colonial cruisers was only less important than that of the national vessels. The former generally acted singly, in this respect differing from the latter, which not infrequently sailed in groups. Indeed, the naval operations of the war were begun by the little schooner *Lee*, belonging to Massachusetts, under the command of John Manly, whose later success in the *Jason* has been already mentioned. The *Lee* was the first vessel of any kind to sail with authority to cruise on behalf of the entire republic. Her capture on November 29th, 1775, of the British brig *Nancy*, laden with military stores for General Gage, brought sorely needed supplies to the colonial troops about Boston. The following June she was helped out of a serious scrape by the only less famous Connecticut brig *Defence*. The two, aided by three privateer schooners, reversed the condition of affairs, and captured two armed transports filled with troops which had just proved too heavy for the schooners alone. Captain John Foster Williams seems to have earned more than one man's share of glory, for he not only captured H.B.M.S. *Active*, 18, while in command of the Massachusetts cruiser *Hazard*, 14, in 1779, but, shortly afterwards in the *Protector*, belonging to the same state, he fought a large letter-of-marque, the *Duff*, said to have been of equal force. The *Duff* blew up in the action. On her way home, the *Protector* had a sharp running fight with the frigate *Thames*, 32, and escaped through skilfully crippling the *Thames* aloft by her well-aimed fire. The action between the Pennsylvania cruiser *Hyder Ally*, 16 and H.B.M.S. *General Monk*, 18, which occurred in the mouth of the Delaware in March, 1782, was one of the most brilliant single ship engagements of which we have any account. Captain Barney well deserves the glory with which song and story invest him

as the hero of this dramatic event for his skill and bravery in compelling success against a superior force within sight of a British frigate and a British privateer brig.

As to the national cruisers, history is somewhat more explicit, although doubts arise in certain cases touching the identity of individual vessels, the readiness with which a ship or an officer passed into or out of the general service obscuring the record.

The first effort at securing a navy bears date of October 13th, 1775, when Congress passed a law ordering one vessel of 10 guns, and another of 14 guns, to be equipped and sent on a cruise to the eastward to intercept royal supplies. Two months later it directed the construction of thirteen ships, three of 24 guns, five of 28 guns, and five of 32 guns. Of these the *Raleigh*, *Boston* and *Montgomery* bore names still to be found on our navy register from which those of the *Warren*, *Congress* and *Delaware* have but comparatively recently been erased. On October 3d, 1776, it authorized another frigate and two cutters, and on November 9th, 1776, three 74's, five more frigates, one sloop-of-war and a packet. The need of heavy ships was beginning to be perceived — at least in theory. Practically but one 74, the *America*, was laid down, and she was presented to France the day of her launching in 1782, to replace the *Magnanime* of De Vaudreuil's squadron, lost while attempting to enter Boston Harbor. On the 22d of December, 1775, Congress appointed Esek Hopkins, of Rhode Island, commander-in-chief, four captains, each by name, to the purchased vessels *Alfred*, *Columbus*, *Andrea Doria* and *Cabot*, together with thirteen lieutenants. Of the latter John Paul Jones was senior.

The *Hornet*, 10, sloop, and the *Wasp*, 8, schooner, were the first regular cruisers to get to sea. As time went on, others were purchased, or borrowed, or hired. Thus in October, 1776, the list comprised the thirteen building



under the act of December, 1775, besides thirteen more, otherwise acquired. From the beginning to the end of the war, the United States had forty-one vessels in commission, including the *Bonhomme Richard* and her four Franco-American consorts. Some of these never got to sea.

Cooper says of the vessels of the act of 1775, "The ships ordered were large enough to resist the small cruisers of the crown, and were well adapted to destroy convoys, and to capture transports and store ships. . . . Most of the ships mentioned, were armed with nines and twelves, having sixes, or even fours, on their quarter-decks and forecastles. It is thought that there were no eighteen-pounder frigates constructed under the laws of 1775." You will perceive that of the necessity of ships for purely military purposes there seems to have been no conception except as embodied in the three 74's that never materialized. Commerce destroying and the intercepting of supplies seem, as is our custom, to have controlled the building programme. The fate experienced by the majority of these vessels was abundantly foreshadowed in their light scantling and Fourth of July batteries.

On the British side we see on our coast a rough average of twenty-six thousand sailors in seventy and more vessels of various sizes. Thus, Lord Howe had six 64's and three 50's at New York in 1778 before Byron's fleet, which counted 74's among its number, arrived to reinforce him. Howe's ships alone were an easy match for all we could possibly gather under one command.

The comparison by numbers, both of ships and men, employed by the two contestants, is greatly in favor of the Americans, but they never had afloat a single vessel able to challenge the British 64's or even 50's, while the advantages of organization, discipline, *esprit de corps* and service traditions lay wholly with their enemies. Too often in-

deed our crews were made up in part of British prisoners who in return for their release had agreed to serve in our navy. The mutiny on board the *Alliance* in 1779 would doubtless have succeeded but for its timely detection. It was planned by the seventy or eighty released British seamen in the crew. The loss of the U. S. S. *Trumbull*, 24, in 1781, was largely due to the presence in her ship's company of "these questionable materials," to use Cooper's expression, to the extent of more than one-fourth out of a scant 200. These men so influenced their comrades that in the confusion of the damage occasioned by a sudden squall and in the darkness of night the captain could not muster fifty of his men to fight the *Iris*, 32, and *General Monk*, 18. The battle might almost be said to have been fought by the officers.

It followed inevitably, as night follows day, with ships often hastily improvised, badly manned, poorly equipped, heterogeneous in type, and handled without unity of purpose or clear notions of strategy, that there was a corresponding waste of energy and barrenness of result. Individual acts of brilliant seamanship and great gallantry abounded. What could have been finer than Nicholas Biddle's behavior in the *Randolph*, 32, when, finding he had engaged not an armed merchantman as he supposed, but the *Yarmouth*, 64, he pluckily fought his great antagonist until his own ship blew up? To mention John Paul Jones and the *Bonhomme Richard* is to recall to mind one of the most extraordinary and stubbornly contested naval battles recorded in history. Indeed, with scarcely an exception, the American flag was flown with such credit and defended with such vigor as to compel our adversaries to acknowledge that, with equal ships, their chances of victory were no greater than ours. I know of no better specific for a relaxed condition of patriotism than the reading of the glowing pages in Cooper which describes these exploits.

But ours is a different task. Let us continue, if possible, to obtain a general view of the naval campaign.

In the early part of 1776, the Commander-in-Chief, Esek Hopkins, with a force consisting of the purchased vessels *Alfred*, 24, *Columbus*, 20, *Doria*, 14, *Cabot*, 14, *Providence*, 12, *Hornet*, 10, *Wasp*, 8, *Fly*, despatch, left the Delaware under instructions to proceed to the southward with a view to act against the naval force, which, under Lord Dunmore, was then ravaging the coast of Virginia. Instead of executing his orders, Hopkins made a descent on New Providence, in the Bahamas, where he captured a number of cannon and other military stores. For his failure to do as directed and for his mishap in engaging, without result, the *Glasgow*, 20, on his way home, Hopkins was eventually dismissed the service. In this case, it was the naval commander who misapprehended the right use to make of a fleet, viz.: for the destruction of the enemy's armed force.

The navy of the United States after this miscarriage, with but rare exceptions, was employed in disconnected cruises against British commerce and British transports. It deliberately declined the purely military rôle for which its weakness ill adapted it, and sought by desultory raids to compensate for its lack of strength. When a favorable opportunity offered, it did not hesitate to engage the enemy on even terms, but these opportunities were not so much by choice as by hazard. The prizes captured were often a welcome, if intermittent, source of revenue. This is especially true of those taken in European waters by such craft as the *Surprise* and *Revenge* under Conyngham, and the *Bonhomme Richard* and her mates under Jones, all fitted out by the American commissioners in France. That British trade was hampered, not to say demoralized, is abundantly proved by contemporaneous reports; (the government was even obliged to furnish convoys for the

Irish coast trade), but unless the high rates of marine insurance and the alarm of the mercantile community can be shown to have exerted a determining influence upon the conclusion of hostilities, it is yet open to question whether all these depredations had a direct military value at all comparable with the operations of a squadron of good vessels sailing with a correct strategic purpose.

The progress of the war was, naturally, marked by a steady decrease of our forces and as notable an increase of the British ships employed on our coast. Thus in 1776 we counted twenty-five vessels and four hundred and twenty-two guns to the enemy's seventy-eight and two thousand and seventy-eight respectively. Two years later we had but fourteen ships and three hundred and thirty-two guns — the English eighty-nine ships and two thousand five hundred and seventy-six guns. Yet, in the meantime, the thirteen frigates and sloops authorized in 1775 had been built, launched and commissioned. The official list sent to Franklin in March, 1780, of the navy of the United States at that time comprises, besides the *America*, 24, *Bourbon*, 36, and *Saratoga*, 18, on the stocks, only eight vessels mounting two hundred and twenty-two guns. The enemy's command of the sea occasioned the loss of those members of this batch which were constructed in the Hudson and Delaware, with hardly a struggle on our part. When the British in 1777 moved into Philadelphia they first bottled up, then afterward destroyed or captured, the *Washington*, 32, *Effingham*, 28, *Delaware*, 24, *Andrea Doria*, 14, *Sachem*, 10, *Wasp*, 8, *Independence*, 10, *Dolphin*, 10, a heart-rending showing truly — and the most extensive disaster to which our little marine was ever subjected. The vessels built in New England were much more fortunate, all getting to sea with useful and honorable careers. The British investment was less strict off

the eastern coast than at New York and Philadelphia. One is unable to escape the regret that more ships and heavier were not laid down at Portsmouth, Salisbury, Providence, Mystic and elsewhere in Massachusetts, Rhode Island and Connecticut.

The British naval operations were confined, principally, to guarding the over-sea communications, and to containing, as military men say, the French squadron in Newport after the formation of the alliance. They were usually characterized by a want of energy which is in striking contrast with the bold and masterful movements of England's later fleets under St. Vincent and Nelson. Lord Howe rose superior to the emergency of 1778, when d'Estaing arrived off Sandy Hook, but this instance of skill and vigor did not redeem a generally weak policy. For our part, we could not have asked for poorer men in command of the British fleet than Howe's successors, Arbuthnot and Graves. It seems incredible that so careless a watch should have been kept over the harbors of New England with their potent menace in ships, sailors and ship-building facilities. In this neighborhood, ingress and egress seem to have been only less free than in times of peace. We wonder whether this could have been the same navy which twenty years afterwards held Brest, Lorient, Rochefort, and indeed the whole coast of France, in the relentless grip of a blockade which remains to this day the model of what such a measure ought to be.

The number of seamen voted by Parliament for the year 1775 was 18,000, but this figure rose by leaps and bounds as the war progressed until it reached the astonishing development of 90,000 in 1781.

When Vice Admiral Samuel Graves arrived at Boston in June, 1774, to take command of the British naval forces on our coast, he found there no less than seventeen ships

and vessels exclusive of his flagship, the *Preston*, and of three divisions of transports.<sup>1</sup>

Beatson says, vol. iv., p. 47: "When Admiral Graves was under a necessity of recalling some of his cruisers, the better to block up the port of Boston, in terms of the act of Parliament, the Americans availed themselves of the weakness of the squadron and procured supplies to an astonishing degree; so that it required more ships than the Admiral could spare, to carry the Boston Port Act into execution."

It was to this locality that the early activity of the British fleet was mainly confined. Besides the interception of ammunition and other stores, Graves took a prominent share in the military operations during the siege of Boston by the Continentals, covering with the *Somerset* 64, the retreat through Charlestown from Lexington, guarding with his ships and boats the principal waterways, defending the British hay and cattle on the different islands in the harbor from destruction and raiding by the Americans, especially lending valuable assistance on the day of Bunker's Hill.

"The *Lively*, *Falcon* and *Spitfire* on that occasion anchored abreast of and below Charlestown, covered the landing of the troops and kept up a well directed fire, as long as they could distress the enemy without too much endangering their own people." [Beatson iv., 76.]

During the fight, the ships threw red hot shot into Charlestown and burnt the town.

It was during the autumn of this year that Falmouth (now Portland) in Maine was burnt by a detachment under Mouat sent out by Graves in the ship *Canceaux*,

<sup>1</sup> Samuel Graves is not to be confounded with Thomas Graves who seven years afterwards was unfortunate enough to fail in his attempt to keep de Grasse out of the Chesapeake. The former was as energetic as the latter was incapable.

the schooner *Halifax*, the sloop *Spitfire*, each mounting 6 guns and the 18-gun armed transport *Symmetry*. What is not so generally known is that this was but one of a series of similar measures contemplated. Gloucester, Beverly, Marblehead, Salem, Newburyport, Portsmouth, Ipswich, Saco and Machias were ordered to be dealt with in this same brutal manner, and in the order named. The wind prevented the British from reaching those highest on the list so that the first blow fell in Maine. The outrage so aroused the whole coast that Mouat, unable to go elsewhere, returned to Boston.

On the shores of Virginia Lord Dunmore was playing a similar part. He and Mouat appear to have been worthy apostles of the doctrine of harrying and ravaging with which Benedict Arnold, after his treason, is most particularly identified. Well may the British chronicler write [Beatson iv., p. 99] “ . . . the progress which hostilities had now made, aggravated by the occurrences of a predatory war, had inflamed the vindictive passions, and carried both parties beyond the bounds of reconciliation.”

In the meantime, through the vigorous and incessant intercepting of British transports and supply vessels by American cruisers and privateers, together with the wiser strategy attending Washington's assumption of general command on shore, the British garrison and fleet in Boston found themselves in a position which may with moderation of expression be termed precarious. On the 17th of March 1776 the town was evacuated, and Rear Admiral Shulldham, Graves' successor, escorted and convoyed General Howe to Halifax, whence three months later they sailed for New York.

In the movements that eventuated in New York's falling into their hands, the British navy took a full, eager, and creditable share.

With the exception of what, for want of a better term,

may be vaguely called blockading duty the British navy seems to have acted largely as an auxiliary to the army, until the advent of the French squadrons. It is needless to enter into the details of the numberless minor joint enterprises that were undertaken. The raiding and burning of towns along the Sound in particular and the coast in general may be recalled in illustration.

The habitual monotony of the British operations was broken on several occasions. In June, 1776, Sir Peter Parker made his attempt on Charleston wherein he proved, for the hundredth time, the inferiority of ships to forts under ordinary conditions of direct attack, and wherein Moultrie and his palmetto logs won the lion's share of glory. This reverse had no appreciable effect on the general course of the campaign, for it merely put a stop to a movement which Lord Cornwallis subsequently demonstrated to be strategically unsound. In December of the same year Newport was occupied by Clinton under escort of Sir Peter Parker in a small squadron of frigates.

When the British army moved on Philadelphia in 1777, a portion of the fleet, now under Lord Howe, aided in its transportation to the head of the Chesapeake, while another portion ascended the Delaware, to be followed shortly by Lord Howe in person. The fortifications and obstructions in the river below Philadelphia were reduced and overcome at the price of considerable loss of ships and men — a loss that was more than counterbalanced by our disasters, elsewhere mentioned.

How seriously was regarded the naval task assumed by England on our coast is shown in the statement at this time by the first Lord of the Admiralty, that "in America there were ninety-three ships and vessels of war of which six were of the line." [Beatson iv., 291.] It naturally suggests itself that the all important purpose of cutting off the colonies from their source of warlike supplies abroad



would have been better served had fewer of these ninety-three vessels been employed as an adjunct to the British army and more set to guard the approaches to our ports. That the British naval force was misused was Washington's firm opinion, confirmed by an episode immediately following the arrival in Newport of the French squadron under de Ternay.

Eighteen years after this time, Nelson at the battle of the Nile demonstrated the entire practicability of crushing a fleet at anchor by the rapid and well conceived attack of another fleet under way and entering the roadstead from the sea. A similar opportunity was enjoyed by Admirals Graves and Arbuthnot in 1780. De Ternay lay in Narragansett Bay with the *Duc de Bourgogne*, 80, the *Neptune* and *Conquérant*, 74's, the *Provence*, *Eveill  *, *Jason* and *Ardent*, 64's, seven ships of the line and two frigates, the *Surveillante* and *Amazone*. The English admirals appeared off the port on the 21st of July with eleven ships of the line, one of 90 guns, six of 74, three of 64, and of 50, a force ample to overcome the French vessels<sup>1</sup> had the commanders possessed the energy of a Nelson. Besides this possible and most desirable result was the strong military necessity of dealing with Rochambeau before he could effect a junction with Washington, to which end Sir Henry Clinton had embarked a large body of troops in transports at Throg's Neck in the Sound. Unable to make up their minds to risk the passage into Narragansett Bay, Graves and Arbuthnot turned back. Clinton now found how intimate was the connection between the integrity of his over-sea communications and operations on shore, for Washington had profited by his absence from the city to make a threatening demonstration on New York.

<sup>1</sup> CHEVALIER : "Hist. de la Mar. Fran.," p. 199.

In 1780, a second combined expedition against Charleston resulted more favorably for the enemy. The town was reduced after a long siege, and our navy lost the *Providence*, 28, the *Queen of France*, 28, the *Boston*, 24, the *Ranger*, 18, together with several smaller vessels.

On the American side, the only instance of the strategic use of our sea power is found in the Penobscot affair, where we failed miserably through neglect of tactical precautions. As this ill-fated attempt illustrates, to an exceptional degree, certain principles of coast defence, it is proper to recite briefly the initial situation and the succeeding events.

The enemy possessed, near what is now known as Castine, a local base for operations in Massachusetts Bay. This post was fairly well fortified and garrisoned. The State of Massachusetts, determining to break it up, organized, in 1779, a land force of some 1500 men under General Lovell, also a fleet of three colony cruisers, and thirteen privateers. To these were added three United States vessels under Captain Dudley Saltonstall. Allen, in his battles of the British Navy, gives the following as the list of American vessels present at Castine, eleven ships, viz.: One 32-gun frigate, one ship of 22 guns, six of 20 guns, three of 18 guns, seven brigs, one of 18 guns, one of 16, four of 14, and one of 12, together with nineteen transports. After much delay, the works were assaulted, but not taken. Reinforcements were sent for. Pending their arrival, Sir George Collier appeared in the offing with the *Rainbow*, 44, *Raisonnable*, 64, *Blonde*, 32, *Virginia*, 32, *Greyhound*, 20, *Camille*, 20, *Galatea*, 20, and *Otter*, 14. A precipitate flight on our side ensued up the river. The *Warren*, 32, *Diligent*, 14, and *Providence*, 12, were run ashore and burnt to prevent their falling into the hands of the enemy. The colonial cruisers and privateers either shared the same fate or were captured

The sailors and soldiers that escaped made their toilsome way back to the settlements through the wilderness of Maine, after prolonged and severe suffering.

The object of the expedition was in all ways laudable. The existence of such a secondary base, within easy reach of our shores, was a serious standing threat to our own operations, as well as a convenient *point d'appui* for the enemy. To destroy such a base, and to remove the attending threat, were objects that justified the attempt, provided the defence could be assured of either one of two things, — the command of the sea or a strong harbor of refuge close at hand. By the terms of the case, the former condition was absent — the enemy being stronger afloat than we were. The latter condition might have been secured, after the expedition had successfully made the dash across from Boston. On the other side of the Penobscot River was an excellent anchorage sheltered behind an island with two entrances, both capable of defence. I may remark that such refuges are indispensable for the weaker fleet in all coast operations. Had Saltonstall devoted a few of the days, lost in idle discussion and waiting, to making his ships safe in the not improbable event of Collier's arrival, the attack could have been delivered with the comforting reflection that interruption would not, of necessity, imply ruin. It does not seem that the panic manifested by the American naval commanders was at all warranted, nor that some show of resistance was not obligatory, in view of the very respectable force he had in hand, as exhibited in Allen's list quoted above. Assuming, for the sake of argument, that Saltonstall's flight was a necessity, through the sudden appearance of superior force, all the greater was his duty to provide a suitable refuge. It was this defiance of the dictates of tactics which wrought such a crushing blow to our already slender naval power.

Three months before, Washington had expressed his views on the subject of this contemplated expedition. They exhibit a sagacity bordering on prescience. Writing to the President of Congress, on April 17th, 1780, he said: "Circumstanced as we are, I do not see how the attempt can be made with any prospect of success. A naval coöperation seems to be absolutely necessary, and for this we do not possess the means. We have no fleet, and the enemy have a respectable one on the coast, which they can at any time employ to frustrate our measures. . . . The operating force, I am informed, must depend on supplies of every kind by water. This communication would be liable to be interrupted at the pleasure of the enemy, and the situation of the troops would be alarmingly precarious. . . . Indeed, considering the position of these States, a fleet is essential to our system of defences, and that we have not hitherto suffered more than we have for want of it, is to be ascribed to the feeble and injudicious manner in which the enemy have applied the means in their hands during this war." (SPARKS: "Writings of Washington," vol. vii., p. 21.)

The error committed by Congress in not providing for a navy competent to wage serious war was, in a degree, repaired by the fortunate alliance with France through which was obtained the presence of a French fleet in our waters and of French troops on our soil. Not having done for ourselves what should have been done, if humanly possible, we were obliged to find friends ready and willing to help us. On February 6th, 1778, was concluded a treaty of commerce between France and the United States of America, together with a second and secret treaty in which the contracting parties agreed to unite their efforts against their common enemy, England. The news of the open treaty—a recognition of the independence of the colonies—was followed by the recall of the British am-

bassador at Paris and the outbreak of hostilities. On April 13th, 1778, Count d'Estaing sailed from Toulon for America with eleven ships of the line, one of 50 guns and five frigates. The English at this moment had six 64's, and six 50's on our coast, — nine of them being at the mouth of the Delaware under the commander-in-chief, Lord Howe. It was hoped and expected that Howe would be overpowered before he could be relieved. D'Estaing was ordered to attack the English wherever he could do so with advantage. Should Howe be so much strengthened as to possess the superiority, the French fleet was to retire on Boston and thence proceed to the West Indies. D'Estaing spent so unconscionable a time on the passage, that Howe was able, after receiving intelligence of the sailing of the Toulon fleet, to take on board the heavy stores and siege train of Clinton's army at Philadelphia, to consume ten days in getting out of the Delaware, hampered by calms, to reach New York, land his soldiers and their impedimenta, station his vessels in the main channel, and erect works on shore for defence before his rival appeared in the offing. D'Estaing touched at Cape May on July 8th, three days after Howe had transported the army from Navesink to the city. He then proceeded to the entrance to New York harbor. A little more celerity on his part, and the British fleet would have been caught on the Jersey coast. As it was, the pilots declared the work insufficient for the heavy French men-of-war, d'Estaing was afraid to cross the bar against the pilot's advice, and an earlier battle of the Nile was *not* fought. D'Estaing went first to the southward, then bore up for Newport, where the English destroyed a number of their vessels, five frigates and a sloop, to prevent their falling into his hands. In the meantime, the British reinforcements had begun to come in, scattered liners of Byron's command sent out from England. Howe, with admirable

industry and vigor, hastened their repairs, put to sea, and arrived off Point Judith but twenty-four hours behind d'Estaing. A strong northerly wind springing up that night, the latter left his anchorage and stood out to sea. The next day was passed in fruitless manoeuvres on both sides. Then came a heavy gale which dismasted his flagship, damaged some of his other vessels, and so discouraged him that he went to Boston, refitted, and eventually sailed for Martinique. A more pitiable instance of great power in feeble hands is seldom recorded. Of results, he achieved none directly. The burning and sinking of the British ships in Narragansett Bay, and the withdrawal of Sir Henry Clinton from Philadelphia were caused by his movements and not by his fighting, his strategy, rather than his tactics.

D'Estaing paid us a brief visit the following year, 1779, on his way back to France. He tried to capture Savannah, then in the hands of the English. This was one of those bits of soldierizing so fascinating to the sailor. It resulted in failure and much loss of life. The French historian, Chevalier,<sup>1</sup> however, remarks, "In spite of the check we suffered, the presence of the French squadron on the coast was not without value to the American cause. The English, ignorant of the point which we proposed to strike, were everywhere on the defensive. General Clinton, fearing that New York would be attacked by land and by sea, concentrated his forces in that city. By his order, Rhode Island was evacuated, and such was the precipitation of the retreat that the Americans found in the place provisions, munitions of war, and pieces of artillery which it had been forgotten to spike." The quotation will serve to recall the suggestion, already made, as to the close relation that existed between the military strategy of the British and the integrity of their over-sea communica-

<sup>1</sup> "Hist. de la Mar." Fran., p. 148.

tions. It is proper to remind you that it was during this time that John Paul Jones was harrying her commerce within sight of England's shores.

On the 12th of July, 1780, the Chevalier de Ternay anchored in Narragansett Bay with seven line-of-battle ships and two frigates. Accompanying him were thirty transports carrying six thousand French troops under the Comte de Rochambeau. This squadron became but a passive menace to the English, for it played no part in active operations during many months, being either closely blockaded or contained by Arbuthnot at Gardiner's Bay. Admiral Rodney, though in command in the West Indies, left his own post and brought a powerful fleet to North America. Here are his reasons in his own words, which deserve quotation if only for the lesson they convey. "Having received certain intelligence by my several correspondents of the arrival of M. de Guichen at Cape François with the French fleet in very bad condition . . . with a certainty of a convoy . . . destined to sail from San Domingo to France under the protection of the French fleet, I had not a doubt but part of that fleet was intended to reinforce the squadron under M. de Ternay, of whose arrival and taking possession of Rhode Island I had been assured by a captain of an American vessel. As it plainly appeared to me that His Majesty's territories, fleet and army in America were in imminent danger of being overpowered by the superior force of the public enemy, I deemed it a duty incumbent on me to forego any emoluments that might have accrued to myself by the enterprise intended by General Vaughan and myself, . . . therefore, without a moment's hesitation . . . I flew with all the despatch possible to prevent the enemy's making any impression upon the continent before my arrival there." For this readiness to go without orders to the place where he knew he was needed he received

the encomiums of the Admiralty. The first lord, Sandwich, wrote him, "It is impossible for us to have a superior fleet in every port; and unless our commanders-in-chief will take the great line, as you do, and consider the King's whole dominions as under their care, our enemies must find us unprepared somewhere, and carry their point against us." In Marshall's *Life of Washington* we read, "This reinforcement not only disconcerted all the plans of the allies, and terminated the sanguine hopes which had been formed at the opening of the campaign, but placed it in the power of the British to project in security further expeditions to the south." Mundy, in his *Life of Rodney*, states that "It appears from a private letter addressed by Washington to a friend at this period that he was in despair at Rodney's appearance on the American coast, and at the non-arrival of de Guichen, the coöperation of whose fleet he had long been most anxiously expecting."

On sailing for Barbadoes late in the year, Rodney left with Arbuthnot enough vessels to make him superior to de Ternay.

The presence of the French squadron in Newport brought about a lasting change in England's naval position. From being free to act on the offensive, whenever and wherever it suited her purpose to move, she was at once thrown, in a measure, on the defensive. Whatever else she might undertake, this it at least was imperative that a sufficient number of powerful vessels should always lie off Narragansett Bay or at some convenient anchorage near by, ready to engage on terms of superiority should de Ternay venture out. Gardiner's Bay was the point selected. Situated at the eastern end of Long Island within easy reach of Newport, offering ample and secure shelter and possessing two channels of exit, one of which would be practicable in any wind, it held out exceptional



advantages to the British of which they were not slow to avail themselves. Accepting the logic of the military situation, Arbuthnot took post at Gardiner's Bay, where the bulk of the British ships of the line were chained until freed by the movements of the French.

Twice during the winter and spring of 1780 and 1781 the latter issued from Narragansett Bay — once in but a small detachment towards the south, and once in force quickly followed by Arbuthnot.

The threat embodied in the existence of a French fleet at Newport served later to introduce confusion into the plans of the British Admiral Graves when de Grasse appeared off the coast. Much of the weakness of his measures may justly be attributed to his fear of being worsted in an encounter with de Grasse who could, unlike Graves, count upon a substantial reinforcement after the action.

It had been the intention of the French government to despatch a second squadron to America and thus to make de Ternay stronger than Arbuthnot, but the close blockade of Brest interfered on the one hand as did Byron's arrival on the other. On the former's death, the command devolved temporarily upon Captain Destouches, who succeeded in getting to sea at night in March, 1781, bound to the Chesapeake. His departure was quickly discovered and his destination guessed by the English, who hastened to bar his entrance into that bay, where Arnold was ravaging the country about Richmond and along the James and whither Lafayette was marching with 1200 Continentals. The two squadrons had each eight vessels, but the English counted in their line one ninety-gun ship while the French had one heavy frigate. They met off Cape Charles in a running fight in which Destouches had rather the better of it, although he gave up his purpose and returned to Newport, while Arbuthnot anchored in the Chesapeake. Mahan says, "The way of the sea being thus open and

held in force, two thousand more English troops, sailing from New York, reached Virginia on the 26th of March, and the subsequent arrival of Cornwallis in May raised the number to seven thousand." [MAHAN, "Sea Power," p. 387.] By order of Clinton, Cornwallis occupied Yorktown, in which point the chief interest now centered. The combined French and American forces at Yorktown numbered about sixteen thousand. It is evident that Cornwallis' fate depended upon his communication by the sea. That such an elementary proposition should have been misapprehended by Graves, now in principal command of the British fleet on our coast, seems incredible, however true. In justice to an officer upon whom rests the responsibility of disastrous failure it is proper to state that at first Graves was misled by information from England into going in person with six sail of the line and two fifty-gun ships to cruise off Georges Bank for the interception of an expected squadron of transports bringing reinforcements of French troops to Rochambeau. During his absence, the pregnant news of de Grasse's probable sailing from the West Indies to America arrived in New York. The vessel sent thence to Graves fell among American privateers and was wrecked on Long Island, while a second despatch boat carrying the more positive intelligence of de Grasse's actual start and destination was captured en route. Graves returned to New York August 16th. There was yet time for an active commander-in-chief to arrange measures by which to profit by the coming of Hood's squadron from the West Indies and to consider what ought to be done in reply to de Grasse's possible attack. Not only did he neglect to take any precaution under this head, but he even seriously contemplated a joint expedition to Rhode Island. Through Graves' return to New York a gap was left open into which de Grasse threw himself with a powerful force from the West

Indies. A desultory action took place off the Chesapeake between de Grasse and Graves of which the only result was to permit de Barras, des Touches' successor, to join de Grasse from Newport and thus to secure for the latter an unquestioned preponderance. He entered the Chesapeake and completed the investment of Cornwallis who surrendered on the 19th of October 1781. On this date the war practically came to an end. Had Graves appreciated the paramount necessity of holding the Chesapeake in rear of Cornwallis or had he met at Cape Henry, Hood with his fourteen ships from Rodney's fleet instead of waiting for him at Sandy Hook, Cornwallis might have been saved.

It is impossible to overestimate the value of de Grasse's share in the great result. Says Mahan "On the French side, de Grasse must be credited with a degree of energy, foresight, and determination surprising in view of his failures at other times. The decision to take every ship with him, which made him independent of any failure on the part of de Barras; the passage through the Bahama Channel to conceal his movements; the address with which he obtained the money and troops required, from the Spanish and French military authorities; the prevision which led him, as early as March 29, shortly after leaving Brest, to write to Rochambeau that American coast pilots should be sent to Cape François; the coolness with which he kept Graves amused until de Barras' squadron had slipped in, are all points worthy of admiration." [MAHAN, "Sea Power," p. 392.] It was in no exaggeration of style that Washington wrote to de Grasse the day after the capitulation, "The surrender of York, from which so great glory and advantage are derived to the allies, and the honor of which belongs to your Excellency, etc." Washington states but the simple truth, the honor of the event does belong to de Grasse.

Mahan says, p. 307, "It must again be affirmed that its (the war's) successful ending, at least at so early a date, was due to the control of the sea, — to sea-power in the hands of the French, and its improper distribution by the English authorities."

No naval event of importance took place during the remainder of hostilities. Raids were effected, and single ships were taken, but the war ended at Yorktown. Fitful flames, as from the ruins of a freshly burned dwelling, alone indicated the existence of still smouldering embers; and Parliament, in 1782, put a final stop to all offensive operations pending the negotiations of the terms of peace.

We have traced the course of events in a hasty and imperfect manner; we have witnessed the gradual disappearance of our little navy; we have seen the happy advent at the critical moment of an allied fleet sufficient in number and power to compel success. In justice to those upon whom devolved the responsibility of conducting the nation's affairs, we must admit that the necessity of a certain measure of sea-power did not continue to be unrecognized. As the war dragged on, with its alternations of victory and defeat, the weak point of the British combinations became apparent, so that when the French alliance was effected, Washington, from whose decision there can be no appeal, laid this down as the first clause of his memorandum of concerted action submitted to the Comte de Rochambeau and the Chevalier de Ternay on July 15, 1780.

"1. In any operation, and under all circumstances, a decisive naval superiority is to be considered as a fundamental principle, and the basis upon which every hope of success must ultimately depend."

That the campaign ending in the concentration upon Yorktown was a direct result of an assumed superiority

of the French fleet, is seen in his letter to Colonel Laurens at Paris, dated 9th April, 1781. "On the first notice of the storm, which happened on the 22d of January, and of its effects, I intimated to the French general the possibility and importance of improving the opportunity in an attempt upon Arnold. When I received a more certain account of the total loss of the *Culloden*, and the dismasting of the *Bedford*, two seventy-four gun ships belonging to the British fleet in Gardiner's Bay, I immediately put in motion, under the command of the Marquis de Lafayette, as large a part of my small force here as I could with prudence detach, to proceed to the Head of Elk, and, with all expedition, made a proposal to the Count de Rochambeau and the Chevalier Des-touches for a coöperation in Virginia with the whole of the fleet of our allies and a part of their land force. . . . It may be declared in a word, that we are at the end of our tether, and that now or never our deliverance must come. While, indeed, how easy it would be to retort the enemy's own game upon them, if it could be made to comport with the general plan of the war to keep a superior fleet always in these seas. . . ."

It is needless to multiply quotations. Washington's correspondence of this period abounds in reiterations of the same plea for ships. Even after the capture of Yorktown, when other offensive movements were contemplated, he wrote de Grasse suggesting a plan of further operations, and said: "You will have observed that whatever efforts are made by the land armies, the navy must have the casting vote in the present contest." Had such a view prevailed six years before, how different would have been the course of events! Our forefathers learned from an experience by which we should profit. It is easy for us, after a lapse of more than a century, and guided by the teachings of the new school in naval

thought, of which Captain Mahan is the most brilliant exponent, to survey the war, and point out the mistakes made on both sides.

It may be alleged that the poverty of the colonies was an all sufficient bar to the acquisition of a suitable navy. To this it is difficult to make an answer other than to urge the imperative necessity as proved by subsequent events for proper ships under proper organization. At all costs and at any sacrifice they should have been obtained, for upon them ultimately depended our existence as a nation.

The fact is that Congress, at the outset, failed to appreciate the strategic form which the war was inevitably bound to assume. Herein lies a reason, cogent in itself, for the course which was actually adopted. When our public men finally came to a realization of our needs, it was too late to repair the fault. Fortunate we were in securing from our friend and ally the means we had neglected to provide for ourselves.

Let us, in conclusion, recapitulate the deductions to be drawn from this study. They are five in number.

1st. A mistaken idea at the inception of hostilities of the ultimate importance of naval power.

2d. As a corollary to the above, a ship-building programme wrong in its details and wrong in its extent.

3d. A misuse of our great maritime resources through which we failed to derive substantial benefit from a superiority in numbers afloat which were nearly, if not quite, three to one in our favor.

4th. A neglect of tactical precautions in the one case of a serious combined expedition.

5th. The termination of the war by the presence of an adequate naval force.

If these inferences be accepted as correct, it follows, as a broad generalization, that a sufficient navy is, to-day, of paramount importance to us in coast defence. Possessing

it, we need have little fear. Without it, we shall be debarred from acting on the offensive-defensive and must remain content to retire from the sea, abandon our coast-wise commerce, and seek refuge behind the immobile works erected at the principal ports for their protection against the foreign fleets which a continuance of the old continental policy will assuredly invite to our shores. It is not meant to imply that our navy should rival in numbers that of any possible foe, but it is held and urged that, as our forefathers built sloops and frigates where line-of-battle ships alone would answer, we should profit by their unhappy experience and concentrate our efforts in naval construction on armored vessels until our fleet is strong enough to serve its true purpose, the avoidance of hostilities through its power to act with vigor and effect in the event of war. More than this we do not require and more than this would be contrary to our traditions as a people who seek only peace with honor.





# THE CONSTITUTION AT TRIPOLI.

BY

PROFESSOR IRA N. HOLLIS.

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## THE CONSTITUTION AT TRIPOLI.

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By Act of Congress approved March 3, 1801, the Navy was reduced to a peace footing, and only those ships built expressly for the service were retained. The country had not yet reached the point of dealing adequately with the Algerian and Tripolitan pirates, and there was very little use for the heavy frigates. The crew of the Constitution was accordingly paid off, and the ship was dismantled at the Boston Navy Yard, where she lay from March, 1801, to August, 1803. On the 14th of that month she sailed for the Mediterranean under the command of Edward Preble, to serve as flagship on the blockade which broke the power of the corsair. She carried out as passengers Colonel Tobias Lear, Consul General of the United States to the Barbary States, and his wife.

The chain of events which led up to this voyage forms an interesting and instructive lesson on the impotency of our foreign relations one hundred years ago. The treaty with Algiers had awakened the cupidity of Tripoli, and the Dey complained to our consul that he was not receiving the attentions paid to Algiers and Tunis. He wanted a frigate like that presented to the former.

A letter to the President of the United States from the Dey of Tripoli in May, 1800, reads as follows:

“After having cultivated the branches of our good will, and paved the way for a good understanding and perfect friendship, which we wish may continue forever, we make known, that the object and contents of this our present letter is, that whereas, your consul, who resides at our court in your service, has communicated to us, in your name, that you have written to him that you regarded

the regency of Tripoli in the same point of view as the other regencies of Barbary, and to be upon the same footing of friendship and importance. In order further to strengthen the bonds of a good understanding, blessed be God, may he complete and grant to you his high protection. But our sincere friend, we could wish that these your expressions were followed by deeds, and not by empty words. You will therefore endeavor to satisfy us by a good manner of proceeding. We, on our part, will correspond with you with equal friendship, as well in words as deeds. But if only flattering words are meant without performance, every one will act as he finds convenient: we beg a speedy answer, without neglect of time, as a delay on your part cannot but be prejudicial to your interests."

The President was negligent about soothing the injured feelings of this Oriental gentleman, and accordingly, May 14, 1801, he ordered the American flagstaff cut down in token of a declaration of war, and told the American consul he could go or stay. The Dey of Tunis was also displeased, and demanded various gifts, principally forty cannon, all to be 24-pounders, and ten thousand stands of arms. He wanted them at once. Released from the difficulty with France, the United States was able to send a squadron to the Mediterranean in the summer of 1801. Commodore Richard Dale was ordered over with four ships simply to observe the ports of the Barbary States. He was directed not to go beyond the line of defense. In consequence, a Tripolitan armed vessel captured by the *Enterprise* was released after being dismantled and stripped of her guns. Commodore Dale succeeded in protecting American ships by convoy and by a display of force in the North African ports, but his orders were too limited for effective work and his ships were not suitable; besides, the time of his men ran out, and he was relieved early in 1802 by Commodore Richard V. Morris with a squadron of six ships. This squadron accomplished practically nothing, for which Commodore Morris was suspended by the President in June, 1803. He was directed

to turn over his command to Captain Rodgers, pending the arrival of Commodore Preble.

The Constitution reached Gibraltar on September 12, 1803, just twenty-nine days from Boston, and met there three ships of Morris's squadron,—the Adams, on the eve of returning to the United States with Morris, and the New York and John Adams under John Rodgers, who was also ordered to bring his ships home. The Philadelphia had arrived out in August, the Nautilus in July, and several other ships joined later. By November 1 Preble had under his command the following vessels:—

Constitution	44 guns	Edward Preble
Philadelphia	44 "	William Bainbridge
Argus	16 "	Isaac Hull
Siren	16 "	Charles Stewart
Vixen	14 "	John Smith
Nautilus	12 "	Richard Somers
Enterprise	12 "	Stephen Decatur

The government, having discovered by experience with two different squadrons that frigates were too heavy for the service before Tripoli and Tunis, had authorized the construction of four small vessels early in 1803. The work on them was pushed as rapidly as possible, and they were sent to the Mediterranean, one at a time, as they were completed. Of these, the Argus and Siren were brigs, the Vixen and Nautilus schooners. The Enterprise was a schooner left on the station from Commodore Morris's command. They were intended for inshore work, where light draught was a necessity. The character of the north coast of Africa rendered navigation for large ships very dangerous when pursuing the smaller piratical craft, which could run for refuge into any of the shallow bays and inlets. The Constitution and the Philadelphia were really too heavy for blockade duty on the south shore of the Mediterranean, and too light for the bombardment of forti-

fications, so that their places seemed as convoys; but the United States possessed nothing better. The line-of-battle-ships were not built until afterwards. Commodore Preble's little fleet has been called the nursery of the Navy, or the training school of the War of 1812; and its commander had so great an influence in shaping the characters of a number of men who were destined to mould the chaotic mass of ships and men then called the Navy into a well-disciplined service, that he deserves more than a passing mention. The importance of having a clear head at the beginning of things cannot be overestimated. We owe to Preble more than the release from the pirates of North Africa. The spectacular always has a great attraction, and in the heroic deeds of our young sailors and the glitter of arms as they fought hand to hand with the corsairs, we must not lose sight of the long weeks of preparation and the wise guidance of impetuous seamen to a single end.

Edward Preble was one of the best of our early seamen, and as an officer earned the good will of all who served under him. Notwithstanding this, his subordinates disliked him at first, and time was required to discover beneath a violent temper kindness and justice. His discipline was rigid, but applications to serve under him were numerous. The great responsibility of the Mediterranean station, with insufficient means to carry out the designs of Congress, demanded an organizing ability altogether different from that displayed in the great single actions of the Navy. It was undertaken and supported without flinching, although he was gradually sinking under bodily infirmity. He took command of the squadron at the age of forty-two and died four years later.

Although the squadron formed only a fraction of our available sea force, a large majority of the officers who

distinguished themselves in the War of 1812 served under Preble before Tripoli. Decatur, Hull, Stewart, Biddle, Macdonough, Lawrence, Warrington, Chauncey, and Burrows, were all men much above the average. Bainbridge, Jones, and Porter were prisoners in Tripoli, and Perry had gone home in the Adams just after the new squadron came out. All of the commanding officers were young. Not one had reached the age of thirty when Preble first met them for a conference in his cabin. He felt that the government had not dealt fairly with him in sending out a lot of boys. In fact, he expressed his dissatisfaction to Mr. Lear, who was on board. When afterwards reminded that he had called them boys, he said, "Yes, but they are good boys." He also told Mr. Lear that no commander was ever blessed with better officers. It was perhaps the intimate personal association with Preble and with one another in a very trying and difficult service that went far to form their characters and to fit them for the more independent commands which came afterwards. We probably owe more than the conquest of Tripoli to this association. Personal acquaintance and sympathy have much to do with success in any service, and Commodore Preble seems to have had the faculty of inspiring young men to do their best without jealousies. There was not a court-martial or duel during his entire command.

The means placed in Preble's hands were entirely inadequate, and the Secretary said as much. The Department left him to create his own force as best he could, and this he accomplished partly by capture and partly by purchase of gunboats and bomb-vessels. The base of supplies was so remote and the Navy Department so poorly organized to meet the constant needs of the squadron that Preble often had great difficulty in obtaining provisions. Everything had to go out from home, on account of the great scarcity in the Mediterranean, where the English and

French ships were struggling for supremacy. The surgeon reported that many of the men were on the sick list because they were insufficiently clad, and much of the food which reached them from home was spoiled. Add to this the fact that the United States had no recognized position abroad, no reciprocity treaties with foreign countries, and that drafts were difficult to negotiate, and we get some idea of the obstacles which confronted our ships four thousand miles away from their own ports with very irregular communication. The wonder is that they accomplished anything. All of them were short of men, and contained a great many foreigners in their complements.

Some light is thrown upon the impressment controversy with England by the enlistment of the Constitution's crew. Preble had had great difficulty in obtaining seamen, as the government would not pay as much wages as could be earned in the merchant-service, and the men whom he did engage were principally foreigners. He wrote to the Department, "I do not believe that I have twenty native American sailors on board." The Philadelphia was about as badly off, and we find Bainbridge after her capture by the Tripolitans suggesting to Preble the propriety of allowing Nelson to claim the English subjects among her crew, three-fourths of them being of that description, in order to release them from captivity and slavery. There were frequent desertions to British ships of war, so that Preble felt himself obliged to remove his provisions and stores from their ports, and to make Syracuse the port of deposit.

In these days of steam the younger generation cannot realize the tremendous task of holding upon the blockade both winter and summer a lot of vessels dependent entirely upon their sails for propulsion. And Tripoli was particularly unfavorable for such work. The prevailing wind during the winter months was from the north and east,



with an occasional hurricane from that direction, making it exceedingly dangerous for a ship to be caught in the angle formed by the shores of Tunis and Tripoli. The first indications of a gale forced the ships to claw off and to make easting if possible. An extract from the Constitution's log shows how the officers regarded the coast. "The weather to the northward has every appearance of a strong breeze from that quarter. A heavy gale from the N. E. or the N. N. E. would make our situation very disagreeable. It would expose us to an enemy's coast, the angular position of which to the Northward and Westward makes it necessary to avoid that part by standing to the Eastward. We could only lay the coast along, and of course afford no drift or leeway. The horrors of shipwreck added to irretrievable slavery makes the coast very dangerous in the winter. If any cruises on this coast in a heavy gale on shore, they have no other safety but their sails, and if they once lose them, they lose all hopes of a retreat."

Before going into the Mediterranean, Preble found it advisable to secure the Straits for the free entrance of American ships. There was good ground for believing that the Emperor of Morocco had broken the treaty signed by his father, as the Philadelphia on her way out had run across the Moorish cruiser Mirboka in possession of an American merchantman. Bainbridge had taken them into Gibraltar, where another cruiser, the Meshouda, was held by the squadron. She had been captured while trying to run the blockade of Tripoli, but she was claimed by the Moors. Preble determined to use his squadron and these two prizes, the former by way of intimidation and the latter for the purpose of exchange, in restoring the ancient amity between our country and Morocco. The decision was wise. Considering the fact that all of his supplies had to pass through the same way,

he could not afford to leave an enemy in his rear, and that too, in the very neck of the bottle which he was entering.

He accordingly sent the Philadelphia and the Vixen to establish once more the blockade of Tripoli, and he then crossed over to Tangier in the Constitution, accompanied by the Nautilus and the John Adams, the last named under Rodgers, who had generously waived his seniority over Preble for the good of the cause. The Constitution was kept cruising between Gibraltar and Tangier and off the coast of Morocco awaiting the arrival of the Emperor. Her movements were often delayed by unfavorable winds, as a head wind either in or out of the Strait rendered navigation difficult. But the time came at last when Preble, backed by a strong show of force, including the John Adams and the New York, was able to influence the war-like ruler into good behavior. A new treaty was signed, by the terms of which mutual concessions were made, but no tribute was paid.

The two armed Moorish vessels in our possession were returned, and a United States merchantship detained in a port of Morocco was released. Good care was taken to send a ship to see to the release, and a sharp eye was kept on the Moors for some time afterwards. They have never given us any trouble since. It is interesting to note, from an entry in the Constitution's log-book, Preble's readiness to accept the alternative of peace without asking the President for a declaration of war. "October 5. At anchor in Tangier Bay. Men sleeping at the guns all night before. In the forenoon saw fully ten thousand Moorish inhabitants marching in from different directions."

All of the ships were prudently kept ready for action until the Emperor's disposition was ascertained, and Preble wrote the following letter to the American consul: —

U. S. S. CONSTITUTION, TANGIER BAY,  
Six P. M. Oct. 4, 1803.

I am honored with your communication of this evening. I shall not send a boat on shore until I have the Emperor's permission, but shall wait your communication by a shore boat.

As you think it will gratify his Imperial Majesty, I shall salute him and dress ship; and if he is not disposed to be pacific, *I will salute him again.*

Respectfully,

E. PREBLE.

On October 17 the ship was back at Gibraltar, the last remnants of the preceding squadron had departed for home, and Preble was alone to work out his mission. He sailed for Cadiz on the 22d to get a new anchor, and a stream cable, and to fill his casks with fresh water. On the return, he stopped at Tangier Bay to communicate with the consul and "to let the Moors know that he had not forgotten them," and reached Gibraltar Bay on November 6, where he found the *Argus*.

On the 20th he declared Tripoli in a state of blockade, and sent word to our ministers and to several of our consuls in Europe that he had done so. Only one more piece of business remained before he could proceed to Syracuse, which had been selected for headquarters. He sailed on November 13 with the *Nautilus* and *Argus* to land Colonel Lear at Algiers; and having accomplished this one week later, he was free to sail for the rendezvous on the 22d. On the 24th he spoke the British ship *Amazon* off the coast of Sardinia, and heard of the loss of the frigate *Philadelphia*, and on the 28th he finally touched at anchor in the harbor of Syracuse, having come to Malta for confirmation of the bad news.

It seemed as if fate were against the expedition. The loss of the *Philadelphia* deprived the squadron of fully one third of its strength. One of the smaller vessels was needed, for a few months at least, to guard the Straits; and Preble thus had left the *Constitution* and four small

vessels. To add to his perplexity the winter season had come on, and he was forced by the dangerous nature of the coast to postpone active operations against the city six or seven months. In the meantime he made every effort to maintain the hazardous blockade. The disaster to the Philadelphia occurred on October 31, two weeks before Preble left Gibraltar for the East. Soon after Bainbridge arrived off the harbor of Tripoli, he sent the Vixen in search of a cruiser that had come out a few days before. He was thus left to maintain the blockade alone with a ship entirely too deep for inshore work. A gale of wind swept him to the eastward, and, while returning before a fair breeze, he sighted a large xebec standing into Tripoli. With his usual impetuosity, he chased her close inshore within three miles of the town, but she escaped. In hauling off, the Philadelphia ran on a shelving rock, and her bow was lifted from three to four feet by the force of the blow. The position of this rock was not known to the Americans. The yards were braced aback, and the guns were run aft where the water was deeper, in the attempt to get her off. Nine of the enemy's gunboats came out at once, and Captain Bainbridge hastened to have the forward guns and the anchors thrown overboard, but it was in vain; the case was absolutely hopeless. The gunboats had obtained a position from which they could fire upon the ship without a return fire, and there was nothing for the Americans to do but to surrender. They made one last effort by pumping out the fresh water, throwing overboard all the heavy articles, and cutting away the foremast. Still the ship stuck hard and fast on the reef. Captain Bainbridge then flooded the magazines, scuttled the ship, and hauled down the flag to save the lives of his crew. Thus 22 officers and 293 men became prisoners of the Dey, and the Philadelphia was added to his possessions a few days later. A northwest gale piled up the sea around

the rock, and the Tripolitans were able to get her into a position from which she was easily floated. They raised the guns, and proceeded to fit her for service. The loss of this ship had a baneful effect upon the war, as it gave the Dey something to trade upon, and put into his possession a number of American sailors for ransom. Preble might well feel distressed and embarrassed at the very outset of his mission. He never showed any lack of confidence in Bainbridge, however, and throughout his captivity managed to send him a number of generous and sympathetic letters. One of these letters indicates the channel of communication as well as the good will he bore him.

MALTA, Jan. 23, 1804.

You will receive a present supply of money from here through the British consul, B. McDonough, Esq., forwarded by Mr. Higgins.

Any letter you will direct to the care of William Higgins, Esq., whom I have appointed Agent at this post for the squadron of the United States in these seas, and I am confident that he will pay you every attention. The clothing and other stores which ought to have been with you six weeks since, were detained by Mr. Pulis; and for what reason, I know not. Your drafts on Mr. Higgins will be duly honored. Keep up your spirits, and despair not; recollect there's a sweet little cherub that sits up aloft.

May the Almighty Disposer of all events aid me in my plans and operations for the good of my country, and may you be liberated by them is the hope of

Your friend who esteems you,

EDWARD PREBLE.

A chart of the harbor discloses a number of shallows in the approaches and a long line of reefs running to the eastward. The anchorage lies behind this barrier, well protected against westerly and northerly gales. There are several entrances, but they demand a good knowledge of the surrounding rocks to be used by vessels of any draught. Once inside the line of shallows, it would have been difficult for a large ship to get out even with a chart,

and the only valid criticism against Bainbridge was that he let his ship be drawn too far in. There was no survey at that time, and he had no means of knowing the coast. The sounding lead was kept going, and the Philadelphia was in six or seven fathoms of water just before she struck. Captain Bainbridge has always been held blameless for an accident that was bitterly expiated in eighteen months' captivity under horrible conditions.

As an example of the difficulties in the maintenance of communication between the flagship and the other members of the squadron, the voyage of the *Vixen* to the westward may be cited. She was at Malta when news of the Philadelphia's loss reached her. Lieutenant Smith immediately sailed for Gibraltar to notify Commodore Preble, but in the stress of heavy weather probably passed him not far from Algiers. After twenty days of contrary winds, he had made good only one third of the distance to the Straits, and found himself short of provisions. He therefore returned to Malta, which he must have reached just after the *Constitution* had left, and, having taken on board provisions, sailed for Syracuse. The distance was only about one hundred miles to the northwest, and yet the *Vixen* was thirty days getting to her anchorage. There is a constant note of delay in the *Constitution's* log. She, or one of the other vessels of the squadron, was repeatedly detained for days inside of the harbor, when she wanted to get out, or outside when she wanted to get in. Every movement depended on the wind. There was no limit to the patience and perseverance demanded of the officers, and much was of necessity left to the discretion of the various commanding officers when separated from the commander-in-chief.

It is not the purpose of this paper to give a complete account of the war with Tripoli. It was carried on mainly by the smaller ships, but every expedition was planned on

the Constitution, which was kept incessantly active. Preble's plan was evidently to seal up the port of Tripoli to commerce by keeping one or more ships constantly on the blockade; and, when he got everything in readiness, to make an assault on the walls and fortifications. The Dey had accumulated nineteen gunboats, and had fortified the town and outlying regions. He employed the crew of the Philadelphia at the latter work. On December 17 the Constitution sailed with the Vixen and the Enterprise on a cruise, evidently of observation, after having waited four days to get out of the harbor; they were finally towed out by the squadron's boats. They stopped at Malta for dispatches, and then headed for the coast of Tripoli. A Tripolitan ketch was sighted on the 23d, and, by displaying English colors in the fleet, the Enterprise was able to capture her. She proved to be the Mastico, carrying blacks as a present to the Sultan of Turkey. Several officers of distinction on board were taken to the Commodore's table. On the 24th they arrived off Tripoli; but a gale from the northeast blew up, and, after having beaten about for four days in the triangle formed by Tripoli; Tunis, and Malta, the Constitution took the ketch in tow and sailed for Syracuse. She remained in port from January 1 to March 1, 1804, but Preble made a voyage to Malta in the Vixen during the interval. The smaller ships were constantly coming and going.

On the night of February 16 the Philadelphia was burned by American sailors under Decatur. This expedition had been planned early in December by Preble. Later he received letters from Bainbridge suggesting that the ship should be destroyed, and giving him information about her position and the surrounding batteries. This correspondence was carried on by the aid of the Danish consul, Mr. Nicholas Nissen. The secret part of it is said to have been written in sympathetic ink. Decatur had

volunteered to go in with his own ship, the *Enterprise*, and capture her by boarding; and later Stewart had offered to cut her out with the *Siren*. Preble substituted the ketch, a duty for which she was adapted on account of her general appearance. She was fitted out for the purpose at Syracuse, and rechristened *Intrepid*. The destination of this vessel must have been kept a secret in the fleet until the last moment; for as late as February 1 the *Constitution's* log contains an entry stating that the prize was being fitted for some expedition under Decatur. She sailed on February 2, in company with the *Siren*. Her crew was made up of volunteers from the *Enterprise*, Decatur's ship, and five midshipmen from the *Constitution*. There were eleven officers, among them Decatur, Lawrence, Joseph Bainbridge, Morris and Macdonough, a Maltese pilot, and sixty-two enlisted men. The pilot, Salvatore Catalano, afterwards became a sailing-master in the United States Navy. Commodore Morris says in his journal that a boat with six men joined them from the *Siren* before going in. This would make a crew of eighty men in all.

In this wretched boat, rigged for sixteen oars, and hardly larger than a fair-sized sailing yacht, seventy-four men reached the coast four days later, convoyed by the brig *Siren* under the command of Charles Stewart, and headed for a passage through the rocks to the inner harbor.

She arrived in sight of the town on the afternoon of the 6th, and anchored off the entrance at nightfall; but a sudden and violent gale swept her to the eastward, and both she and the *Siren* had to ride out at sea a terrific storm that lasted six days and nights. At times it was feared that the *Intrepid* could not last through it; but the seventh day found both vessels near the harbor, once more in favorable weather. The *Siren*, well disguised, did not approach within sight of the coast during daylight, but the *Intrepid* sailed calmly for the port as if on an ordinary trading voy-



age. Several of the boats of the Siren were to join her before going in, but Decatur did not wait for them. The uncertainty of the weather forbade delay. He had made all his arrangements to burn the Philadelphia, and then to escape by towing or rowing the Intrepid out of the harbor under cover of the darkness. Every man had his allotted station and task. As soon as the frigate was taken, each was to rush with combustibles to a specified place. The greater part of the crew lay hidden behind the bulwarks, as the ketch drifted slowly down in the half darkness of a new moon to the anchorage.

It is well to stop a moment to consider what one mistake would have cost them. The Philadelphia had a full crew, all her guns were loaded, and she was surrounded by Tripolitan gunboats. Not one of the Americans could have escaped if the slightest suspicion had been aroused before boarding; yet they went boldly on to within a few feet of the Philadelphia, and, when hailed, the Maltese pilot replied that the ketch was a Maltese trader that had lost her anchors in the storm. They asked for a line and permission to tie up to the ship over night. They lay only forty yards from the port battery, and in the range of every gun at this time. While Decatur coolly sent a boat to make fast to the fore chains of the Philadelphia, some of the latter's crew came out with a line from the stern, and assisted them in making fast there also. A few minutes of cautious pulling on the bow line, then a wild cry of "Americanos!" from a Turk who was looking over the bulwarks, and the Americans were clambering up the side in a scramble to see who would be first on the frigate's deck. In a mad panic the crew were either cut down or driven into the sea. Everything worked exactly as Decatur had planned it, and within twenty minutes the ship was ablaze. His men were fairly driven back into their boat by the flames.

The return was even more perilous than the entrance, as all the forts and gunboats had taken the alarm. Their shots were falling around the *Intrepid* and dashing the spray into the faces of her men, as she swept down the harbor under sixteen long oars. The flames of the *Philadelphia*, the roaring of her guns as they went off one by one in the intense heat, the blinding flashes of the Turkish guns, and the uproar in the town, made the night one never to be forgotten; a fit ending to what Nelson pronounced "the most bold and daring act of the age." Decatur rejoined Stewart, who was waiting for him outside, and the two set sail for Syracuse.

The log of the *Constitution* has the following entry concerning this event:—

SUNDAY, FEBY. 19. — A. M. At 10 appeared in the offing the United States Brig *Syren* and the *Intrepid*. The wind being light we sent boats out to assist towing in. At  $\frac{1}{2}$  past 10 they passed through our squadron in triumph receiving three cheers as they passed. Lieutenant Stewart of the *Syren* and Lieutenant Decatur of the *Intrepid* waited on the *Commodore* and informed him they had passed into the harbor of Tripoli agreeably to his orders, burnt and totally destroyed the late United States Frigate *Philadelphia*. The business being so well planned not a man was killed or wounded on our side. The Tripolitans had 20 killed, the others made their escape by jumping overboard after the ship was afire.

The officer who wrote the log was evidently not well informed, as Stewart did not go in with Decatur. If that was the original plan, the conditions of the weather did not favor it.

This deed deserves to rank high in the annals of our Navy, not so much because it displayed an uncommon courage, but rather because of the skill and coolness which made it a complete success. Few American sailors are without daring to undertake a hazardous service, yet few men have the necessary presence of mind to carry it

through without a hitch. Three times the expedition was recovered from failure by the exercise of the good judgment which marks Decatur's career.

The extraordinary activity of the *Constitution* during the spring and summer of 1804 was almost like the work of a modern steamer. She left Syracuse on the 1st of March, and had put to sea nineteen times from that or other ports by the end of July, being under sail half the time. March 27 Preble was at Tripoli, and sent a flag of truce in with letters for the captive officers. He proposed an exchange of prisoners, but failed to secure the consent of the Dey. Permission was given to send provisions and clothing for the captives. Three days later the ship was caught in a heavy northeast gale and swept to the westward along the coast. During the month of April she was twice in the harbor of Tunis to keep an eye on the Dey and his navy. Toward the end of the month the *Siren* captured a Tripolitan brig used for carrying military stores. She was refitted and called the *Scourge*. Preble now made a voyage to Naples for the purpose of obtaining money and additional gunboats. He succeeded in getting an order from the King for gunboats and bomb-vessels "under the title of a friendly loan." They were found at Messina, from which port the *Constitution* sailed in convoy of six gun-vessels and two mortar-boats with their ammunition. Having reached Syracuse and left them to be gotten ready for service, she sailed successively to Malta, Tripoli, and Tunis. She touched at the last place to ascertain why so many Tunisian cruisers had put to sea. On the 25th of June they were back in Syracuse, where Preble addressed himself seriously to preparations for an attack on the ships and fortifications of Tripoli. He sailed for that purpose on July 14, with the gun-vessels and mortar-boats in tow, and reached the coast on the 24th.

As he was already short of men for his own ships, the boats borrowed from Naples were in part manned by Neapolitans shipped for the occasion. Not one of these vessels exceeded thirty tons burden, and they were but poor craft, fit only for use in a smooth sea and needing much "nursing" at all times. Each of the bomb-vessels mounted one 13-inch brass mortar, and had a crew of forty men, and each of the gunboats carried a long 24-pounder in the bow. The defenses of the Dey were very formidable. The city was walled, and the shore batteries mounted 119 guns, many of heavy calibre. In the harbor were nineteen gunboats, two large galleys, two schooners and a brig, all well armed and manned. The Tripolitan force on shore and afloat numbered upwards of 25,000, to oppose the American squadron carrying 1060 men. Preble had in all one frigate, three brigs, three schooners, six gunboats, and two mortar-boats. The Constitution carried at this time thirty long 24-pounders on the gun-deck, and six long 26-pounders and some lighter guns on the fore-castle and quarter-deck.

The work for which the squadron had been patiently preparing during the past ten months had come at last, and they went at it with ferocious energy. They made five attacks between July 25 and September 4, in three of which the Constitution took part; in fact, they were pounding away at the forts and gunboats whenever the weather would permit. On the 24th, the water-casks of the smaller boats were all filled from the flagship as a precautionary measure, since they carried only six days' supply. The first assault was planned for the next day, but the wind proved unfavorable. Again, on the 28th, they were headed in and anchored within two and a half miles of the town. The plan was to tow the gunboats, arranged in two divisions, and the mortar-boats as close to the shore as it was possible for the heavier vessels to go,

and then to cast them off and cover them with the squadron's guns for an attack upon the Tripolitan gunboats inshore. With this attack in view the ships had anchored, but a sudden change of wind, which developed into a northeast gale, drove them to sea for several days. On the 31st the gale had become so violent as to split the Constitution's foresail and main topsail, although she was under double reefs, and the gunboats were in great danger.

The first attack was finally carried out on the afternoon of August 4, with the wind east by south. The whole fleet stood in to point-blank range of the batteries and shipping. The six gunboats then advanced to attack the Tripolitan gunboats, twenty-one of which had come outside in three divisions. The action began by a bomb-vessel throwing a shell into the town, and lasted about two hours, when the ships were compelled to haul off by a change of wind.

The furious charge of the small vessels upon three and a half times their number soon undeceived the Tripolitans, who had come out in the belief that the Americans would not fight. The conflicts were like the traditional old sea-fights, hand to hand on the decks of the enemy, who fought desperately enough when boarded by the Americans. They were driven back into the harbor with severe loss in killed and wounded. Three of their gunboats were brought away with fifty-two prisoners, some of whom died of their wounds; forty-four had been killed outright before the boats were surrendered. The American vessels had suffered only slightly in killed and wounded. James Decatur was treacherously killed in the act of boarding a Tripolitan who had surrendered to him. Three boats were sunk in the harbor, and as many more had their decks nearly cleared of men. A number of shells burst in the town and batteries, and a minaret was knocked down. The inhab-

itants were panic-stricken. The Constitution fired 262 round shot, besides grape, double-head, and canister. She received some damage in her rigging and sails from the Tripolitan fire, and a 24-pound shot struck her mainmast; but the squadron came out with remarkably little injury considering the serious nature of the action and the effect accomplished.

The wounded were all carried on board the Constitution for the surgeon's care, and the prisoners were confined on board of her. In his report Commodore Preble speaks in the highest terms of Decatur and Trippe and of all the officers and crews. Yet he was greatly disappointed in not having destroyed the whole fleet. There is a story that when Decatur came over the side, he walked joyfully up to Preble on the quarter-deck and said, "Well, Commodore, I have brought you out three of the gunboats." Preble turned on him like a flash, and taking him by the collar, replied, "Aye, sir, why did you not bring me out more?" and then walked into his cabin. He sent for Decatur in a few minutes and made ample amends for his rage and injustice. They were always warm friends afterwards.

The stubborn nature of the fighting is exhibited by two stories told in footnotes of the Naval Chronicle. Decatur boarded a gunboat, it is said, to avenge his brother's death. He made straight for her commander, a gigantic Turk, greatly his superior in size and strength, and in the struggle which ensued broke his sword. The two seized each other in a violent scuffle, in which Decatur was thrown. The Turk drew a dagger to stab him, but he managed to get hold of a pistol which he had in the right-hand pocket of his trousers. By twisting it around and cocking it inside of the pocket he succeeded in firing it and killing his antagonist. During the struggle one of the Tripolitans rushed forward to save his captain, and

aimed a blow at Decatur's head, but a young man by the name of Reuben James, who had lost the use of his arms by severe wounds, threw his body forward and took the blow intended for Decatur on his own head. He lived to receive a pension from the government thirty years later.

Lieutenant Trippe, with Midshipman Henley and nine men, boarded one of the gunboats manned by thirty-six men. Against desperate resistance he captured the boat, after having killed fourteen Tripolitans and taken twenty-two prisoners. Trippe received eleven sabre wounds, but not an American was killed.

The next three days were spent in refitting and getting ready for another attack; the three Tripolitan gunboats were manned and added to the attacking squadron. A French privateer which had come out was prevailed upon to carry fourteen badly wounded Tripolitans on shore, where their friends might take care of them. The vessel brought out a letter from the French consul on the morning of the 7th, saying that since the attack the Dey was disposed to accept reasonable terms, and advising Commodore Preble to send in a flag of truce. This was declined, as the white flag was not hoisted on the Dey's castle, and the second attack began forthwith. The direction of the wind and current rendered it inadvisable to engage the batteries with the Constitution; so that all the work was done with the smaller vessels. The bomb-vessels were stationed to the west out of range of the batteries, where they could throw shells into the town; and the gunboats, propelled by oars and sails, made an attack upon the western batteries. Five hundred and forty-eight shots were fired, and the town must have suffered great damage. The Tripolitan ships had remained in the harbor behind the shelter of the rocks. Early in the action one of the prize gunboats was blown up by an explosion of her magazine, which had been penetrated by a hot shot from the

batteries. Lieutenant Caldwell, Midshipman Dorsey, and eight men were killed. The others escaped. Midshipman Spence gained great credit for remaining on board while the boat was sinking, to complete the loading of a gun which he had been superintending when the explosion occurred. He and a few survivors actually fired the gun as the vessel sank, and escaped to the nearest boat. Mr. Spence did not know how to swim, and had to keep himself afloat with an oar.

The squadron hauled off at six o'clock, the *Argus* having been sent in chase of a strange sail. This sail proved to be the *John Adams*, Captain Chauncey, just out from the United States with the news that the government had decided to assemble an overwhelming force, and that several frigates were shortly to join under command of Commodore Samuel Barron, who was to supersede Preble. As the *John Adams* did not have her gun-carriage she was of no use to the squadron excepting in the supply of additional men. Her crew were distributed around. Preble waited eleven days for the appearance of his successor, and then concluded to make another attack, but a northeast gale forced him to stand off the coast for greater safety. After four days of buffeting in a heavy sea, the ships stood in again and anchored six miles from Tripoli. During the stay on the coast the small ships had received their fresh water and supplies from the *Constitution*, and now arrived a supply-ship from Malta with water and live-stock, much to the gratification of all the crews.

On August 10 the Dey indicated a disposition to treat by permitting a white flag to be hoisted by the French consul. A boat was sent in under a flag of truce; but the terms offered, a ransom of \$500 for each captive and no tribute, for terminating the war, were not satisfactory to Preble, in spite of the tremendous reduction over any of



the previous terms. He authorized the French consul to offer \$100,000 in a lump sum, but this was not acceptable to the Dey.

On the 24th the squadron drew close to the harbor, intending to attack the town and shipping at night. It fell calm at midnight, and the smaller vessels had to be towed in. The bombardment lasted from two o'clock until daylight, principally from the mortar-boats, but little damage was done. One shell passed through the wall of the prison, and struck the bed in which Captain Bainbridge was sleeping. A heap of stones and mortar fell on him, but he escaped with only slight injury.

For a few days the weather was again unfavorable for operations. On the night of the 28th the ships moved in, prepared for another early morning attack. The Constitution anchored about one mile and a half to the northeast of the entrance, while the smaller vessels went close to the rocks and opened a heavy fire upon everything in sight. The Tripolitans returned the fire without much effect, as the night doubtless covered the movements of our boats. At daylight all vessels were recalled, and the Constitution stood in alone, under a heavy fire from the batteries, to within 400 yards of the rocks. Preble wrote in his report to the Secretary of the Navy: "We continued running in, until we were within musket shot of the Crown and Mole batteries, when we brought to, and fired upwards of three hundred round shot, besides grape and canister, into the town, Bashaw's Castle, and batteries. We silenced the castle and two of the batteries for some time. At a quarter past six, the gunboats being all out of shot and in tow, I hauled off, after having been three quarters of an hour in close action. The gunboats fired upwards of four hundred round shot, besides grape and canister with good effect. A large Tunisian galliot was sunk in the mole — a Spanish Seignior received considerable damage. The

Tripoline galleys and gunboats lost many men and were much cut."

The Constitution suffered in her rigging, which was much cut up, and some grape-shot was found sticking in the hull, but not a man was hurt. Shortly after six o'clock, as stated in Preble's report, he hauled off to repair damages and prepare the fleet for another attack. Captain Chauncey, of the John Adams, served during this action and the next one on the deck of the Constitution. At noon all the ships were anchored about five miles to the eastward of Tripoli.

They spent the next five days getting water and stores on board and otherwise putting everything in order. On September 3, with the wind east by north, the gunboats advanced against the Tripolitan fleet, which by rare judgment had moved up the harbor to the windward of the entrance, and near Fort English. As our ships could not beat up the harbor to attack them, the smaller vessels were all employed close to the rocks, firing at them. There was no boarding as in some of the earlier contests. The bomb-vessels and the Constitution attacked the town and the batteries. The latter fired eleven broadsides. The action lasted about an hour in the afternoon, when the wind shifted to the northward and began increasing. The squadron was accordingly withdrawn, having disabled a number of the enemy's galleys and gunboats, and thrown a number of shells into the batteries and town.

Preble at once began preparing his ships for another attack, although the weather was unsettled and he was getting short of ammunition. On the night of September 4, occurred that disaster which will always envelop the end of the Intrepid in a melancholy mystery. Commodore Preble had been contemplating for some time the possibility of sending a fire-ship into the harbor to destroy the

enemy's shipping. Richard Somers, the commander of the *Nautilus*, volunteered for the service, and for several days had been directing the preparation of the *Intrepid*. One hundred barrels of powder were placed below her deck, upon which one hundred and fifty fixed shells were arranged. A fuse calculated to burn fifteen minutes was led aft to a box filled with combustibles. The intention was to take the ketch into the harbor on the first dark night that afforded them a favorable breeze, and to explode her among the shipping. Two swift boats were carried in tow to provide for the escape of the crew, consisting of Captain Somers and four men from the *Nautilus*, with Lieutenants Henry Wadsworth and Joseph Israel, and six men from the *Constitution*. At eight o'clock on September 4, the *Intrepid* was under sail standing for the western entrance. The *Argus*, *Vixen*, and *Nautilus* accompanied her as far as the rocks. The first lieutenant of the *Nautilus* was the last person to speak to Somers. The *Intrepid* was last seen standing into the harbor about a musket-shot from the mole, as her sails were swallowed up in the darkness. Soon after, the batteries, which had taken alarm, began firing in all directions from which danger might be apprehended. To those waiting outside for the return of their comrades, there was only a short period of breathless suspense. Then, before the *Intrepid* could possibly have reached her intended position, there was a blinding flash, followed by a frightful concussion which shook even the American ships outside and awed the batteries into silence. For one instant the mast and sail outlined in fire were lifted into the air and then fell back into darkness. The three ships at the entrance waited all night, their crews listening in vain for the oars of the returning boats. They never came back, and from that day to this the cause of the explosion has been a matter of conjecture. Some of the officers held that the *Intrepid* grounded near one of the

batteries and was blown up by a shot penetrating the magazine; others, that a light was dropped into the powder by some one running to set off the combustibles. A light moving rapidly along the deck was seen just before the explosion. Commodore Preble believed that the ketch was intercepted by some gunboats which were seen lurking near the rocks at sunset. His theory was that they suddenly boarded her without suspecting her to be a fire-ship, and that Somers, preferring death to surrender and failure, put a match to the magazine. He based this belief upon the known determination of Somers and his officers neither to be taken nor to let the powder and shot fall into the hands of the enemy, and upon the disappearance of one of the enemy's largest gunboats. Several others were observed to be very much shattered the next day. Captain Bainbridge was afterwards permitted to view certain mutilated bodies which drifted on shore, but he could not identify them. Whatever happened, the name of Somers will always remain a watchword in the Navy and a symbol of the self-renunciation and love which ennoble humanity. He and his companions died in early manhood unsullied, and left behind them imperishable names.

Some light is shed on the tragedy by a story given in General Eaton's memoirs. He was in Egypt during the winter following Preble's campaign, organizing the land attack against Tripoli. An Arnaut Turk who had been in the service of the Dey and was friendly to the Tripolitan cause said to him: "Tripoli has lost many men in the different attacks of the Americans last summer; the town was much damaged and the inhabitants under such a state of consternation that nobody slept in the city and that no business was done there." As Eaton continues, "He confirmed the account of the fire-ship, *Infernal*, being blown up by Captain Somers after having been boarded by two row galleys. Stating this fact, the fellow wept. He

observed that the war had been unfortunate to the cruisers. They had been led to believe that the Americans were all merchantmen, and that they should have nothing to do but to go out and bring them in; but they found them devils from whom nothing was to be gained in war."

Thus ended the war, for there were no more attacks. Bad weather and the uncertain season drove the squadron off the coast. On the 6th of September, Preble sent all except the *Constitution*, *Argus*, and *Vixen* to Syracuse, remaining himself on the blockade to await the arrival of his successor. On the 10th the frigates *President* and *Constellation* made their appearance, and Commodore Bar-ron took command. Two days later, while Preble was still on board, the *Constitution* chased and took two prizes laden with wheat for Tripoli. The city was said to be in a state bordering on starvation. The relief of Commodore Preble was not intended as a reflection upon him, although it did look like ingratitude to supersede him and to give his successor four additional frigates just as he had licked the Dey into shape for a reasonable peace. That he felt it seriously is shown by his journal, but he never made any complaint. The news travelled slowly in those days; and the relief ships had been commissioned in consequence of the loss of the *Philadelphia* months before the result of the blockade was known. Congress voted him the nation's thanks and a gold medal, emblematic of the attacks on the town, batteries, and naval force of Tripoli, and the Secretary of the Navy wrote him a letter expressing unqualified approbation of his work.

The singular good luck of the *Constitution* followed her through the whole of this war. She suffered comparatively little injury and lost not one man in the five assaults upon the Tripolitan batteries. The only man wounded on her decks was a marine, whose arm was shattered during the first attack.

The approach of winter decided Commodore Barron to follow out Preble's plan of keeping up a continuous blockade with two or three ships, and to hold the others at Syracuse until spring. The *Constellation* and the *Congress*, which had just arrived under Captain John Rodgers, were accordingly left on the station. On the 14th of September the *Constitution* proceeded to Malta, and there Preble left her with the heartfelt regret of everybody in the squadron. The officers even went so far as to address him a letter of regret, which all signed. He joined the *John Adams*, and, after winding up his affairs, sailed for home in December.







# THE BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR.

BY

CAPTAIN ALFRED T. MAHAN.

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*Read February 1, 1898.*

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## BATTLE OF TRAFALGAR

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THE subject of my address to you this evening is the Battle of Trafalgar, the single episode of the fight itself and not the campaign preceding it, of which it was the issue. Nevertheless, as there may be some among my hearers to whom even the general subject is not familiar, and as bloodshed in war too commonly falls under the implied condemnation of old Kaspar, in Southey's ballad,

“What they fought each other for, I could not well make out,”

I shall venture to present such bare outlines of the object and course of the campaign as will render clear the cause why the fight was fought just in the spot it was.

Furthermore, for as much as I believe that much of the talk about permanent tribunals of arbitration at the present day is unbalanced, I will make the remark that the battle of Trafalgar was the outcome of causes, in themselves, on both sides, beneficial to mankind, though in themselves for the time irreconcilable. It was good for mankind, and for the progress of our race, that Napoleon Bonaparte arose to preserve from too immediate overthrow that which was good in the French Revolution; that his sway, military despotism though it was, and tyrannically though it was too often exercised, prolonged the ideas of the Revolution, until the ancient system of the European continent was hopelessly shattered, and the way prepared for a new and better order of things. It was good also for the world, in my opinion, that as his exercise of power

became more and more egotistic, and its influence less and less conducive to the advancement of mankind, when in short it had survived its utility, that the conservative political forces of Europe should have combined effectually to overthrow him. Speaking humanly, none but a Napoleon could have done the work he did; Napoleon being what he was, it was necessary that his career should be stopped. War alone, under the conditions, could have effected what Napoleon did, and war alone could have arrested him when he had done his necessary work. Trafalgar marked the beginning of the end.

The one conservative force which withstood Napoleon from first to last, in good and in evil, was Great Britain; she withstood, let it be admitted, not only what was bad in his career, his later overweening tyranny and ambition, but also that early part in which, whatever his personal motives, the influence he exerted tended chiefly to break down the control of the continent by governments no longer fit to exercise control of their own subjects, much less of universal Europe.

Napoleon at a very early date had recognized that Great Britain was the one enemy from whom he had most to fear, because of the tenacious character of her people and the difficulty of reaching her over the intervening sea. Therefore, when war broke out again, in May, 1803, after a brief unstable peace of eighteen months, he resolved to compass the invasion of England, if at all possible, even by the greatest risks. Of this resolve the battle of Trafalgar — fought two years and five months later, in October, 1805 — was the outcome.

It has been questioned whether Napoleon seriously meant in any case to invade England. This question I have briefly discussed elsewhere, and shall not occupy your time by here repeating more than my own conviction that he fully intended to do so, at every risk; but I have

recently met with a corroborative evidence, which very probably many here may not have seen, and which I will therefore venture to read, from "Letters written on board His Majesty's Ship the Northumberland, and at Saint Helena; in which the Conduct and Conversations of Napoleon Buonaparte, and his Suite, during the voyage, and the first months of his residence in that Island, are faithfully described and related — by William Warden, the Surgeon on the Northumberland." At page 53 the following occurs: —

"Every one remembers the threatened invasion of England in 1805, and the various conjectures which were formed on this momentous subject. It was not, according to my recollection, by any means generally considered as practicable; nor did any very great apprehensions prevail that it would be attempted. I will, however, give you my authority for the actual intention of carrying it into execution. Buonaparte positively avers it. He says that he had two hundred thousand men on the coast of France opposite to England, and that it was his determination to head them in person. The attempt he acknowledged to be very hazardous and the issue equally doubtful. His mind, however, was bent on the enterprise, and every possible arrangement was made to give effect to its operations. It was hinted to him, however, that his Flotilla was altogether insufficient; and that such a ship as the Northumberland would run down fifty of them. This he readily admitted; but he stated that his plan was to rid the Channel of English men of war; and for that purpose he had directed Admiral Villeneuve, with the combined fleets of France and Spain, to sail apparently for Martinique, for the express purpose of distracting our naval force, by drawing after him a large portion, if not all, of our best ships. Other Squadrons of Observation would follow; and England might by these manœuvres be left

sufficiently defenceless for his purpose. Admiral Villeneuve was directed, on gaining a certain latitude, to take a baffling course back to Europe, and, having eluded the vigilance of Nelson, to enter the English Channel. The Flotilla would then have sailed forth from Ostend, Dunkirk, Boulogne, and the adjoining ports. The intention was to have dashed at the capital, by the way of Chatham. He well knew, he added, that he should have had to encounter many difficulties; the object, however, was so great as to justify him in making the attempt. But Villeneuve was met on his return by Sir Robert Calder; and having suffered a defeat, took refuge in Ferrol. From that harbor he was peremptorily ordered to sea, according to his original instructions; but, contrary to their most imperative and explicit intent, he steered his course for Cadiz. 'He might as well,' exclaimed Napoleon, raising his voice, and increasing his impetuosity; 'he might as well have gone to the East Indies.' Two days after Villeneuve had quitted his anchorage before Cadiz, a naval officer arrived there to supersede him. The glorious Victory of Trafalgar soon followed, and the French admiral died a few days after his arrival in France; report says by his own hand."

The object of what may be called the Trafalgar *campaign* was the invasion of England. That country was therefore placed on the defensive, and had to conform her movements to the plan of Napoleon, to whom, taking the offensive, the initiative belonged. Napoleon's plan was to cross near, but a little to the westward of the Straits of Dover, with an army of 150,000 men. The point of landing he could not positively anticipate, the tidal currents and weather conditions must greatly affect this; but the point of departure was fixed near and a little north of Boulogne, whence tidal packets now start for Folkestone in England. Here and in the neighboring small ports he

began at once to assemble and drill his army, and to accumulate the vast number of small boats, by which alone the crossing of some forty miles of open sea could be effected.

It was confessedly impossible for this great flotilla to cross if the British navy was present in its ordinary force. Napoleon's great problem, the first move of the campaign, was to get rid of, or to overpower, the North Sea fleet and the squadron in the Downs, near the mouth of the Thames, which were the forces upon which the defence of the Straits of Dover rested. What was commonly styled the British "Channel Fleet" was stationed at the opposite end of the Channel, and was usually before Brest, blockading the largest single fraction of the existing French navy. Both the Channel Fleet and the Squadrons in the Bay of Biscay, blockading Rochefort and the Franco-Spanish ships in Ferrol in Spain, had to be regarded as possible reinforcements of the divisions about Dover. To overpower *them*, however, did not lie in Napoleon's plan. *They* were to be diverted from the scene of action.

Disregarding various modifications, Napoleon's ultimate plan was to send to the West Indies, by carefully combined simultaneous movements, the French and Spanish divisions lying in Brest, Rochefort, Cadiz, and Toulon. He trusted that the escape of these several bodies would so confuse and alarm England that her fleets would be sent in pursuit in different directions; and that, before they recovered from their confusion, his own fleets would return and concentrate before Dover, controlling the Channel for a few days. By the careful preparations made at Boulogne, he calculated that forty-eight hours would suffice for the crossing.

These movements began in March, 1805. The Toulon fleet under Villeneuve escaped the vigilance of Nelson, passed out of the Mediterranean, joined the Spaniards in Cadiz, and thence went on to the French island of Mar-

tinique in the West Indies. There it was joined later by two more vessels from Rochefort, making in all twenty ships-of-the-line ; but the main Rochefort squadron of five ships-of-the-line failed to join, and the Brest fleet of twenty-one failed to get out at all. Meantime, Nelson, after a variety of mishaps, got on the clue to the Toulon fleet's course, and followed it to the West Indies, arriving at Barbadoes with ten ships, just three weeks after Villeneuve reached Martinique. The two adversaries were now but one hundred miles apart ; but, Nelson being misled by false intelligence, Villeneuve again gave him the slip, and started back for Europe. Nelson quickly retrieved an error for which he was not responsible, and again resumed pursuit, starting back for the Mediterranean only one week after his enemy, and actually reaching Gibraltar before the latter regained Europe.

We are now in July, 1805 ; Nelson anchoring at Gibraltar on the 19th of that month, just three months before Trafalgar. The situation at that moment was as follows : Villeneuve with his twenty ships was about 200 miles to the westward of Cape Finisterre, struggling to reach the Bay of Biscay against the northerly winds, which in that region so prevail, that they are called the Portuguese trades. One hundred miles west of the Cape, there was watching for him a British division of 15 of-the-line, which had been formed by raising the blockade of Rochefort and Ferrol as soon as the British ministry learned that Villeneuve was returning to Europe. Off Brest, there were 17 British ships watching 21 French in the port. In Rochefort were 5 French ships ; in Ferrol, 14 allied ships, — 5 French and 9 Spanish ; — in Cadiz, a half-dozen Spanish. Nelson had 11 at Gibraltar, having brought back with him the Spartiate, 74, from Barbadoes. Collingwood with 3 of-the-line was watching Cadiz. The totals sum up : allies 66 of-the-line, British 46 ; but



it is quality more than quantity, men more than ships, that tell in war, and the British in discipline and in leaders were far superior.

The game opened July 22d, when Villeneuve's 20 met the British 15 off Finisterre. In the battle two of Villeneuve's were captured, and he fell back into Vigo. The British admiral Calder took 9 of his ships off Ferrol, sending 5 to resume the blockade of Rochefort; one left him, probably crippled. On the 1st of August, the British being driven from Ferrol by a gale, Villeneuve entered, when he there had a combined force of 29 ships. Calder, upon his return, finding his enemy so increased, decided, not unwisely, to join the fleet off Brest, under Cornwallis. This raised the latter's force to 26; and the next day Nelson joined him with his 11, 9 of which stayed with Cornwallis, while 2, with Nelson himself, went to England.

As the result of these movements there were before Brest 35 British, in Brest 21 French, in Ferrol 29 French and Spaniards. Collingwood off Cadiz still, with 3. Off Rochefort there were quite uselessly 5 British, the 5 French having taken advantage of their foe's previous absence to go to sea. These last two opposing divisions may be dismissed from our minds henceforth; they played no part in the coming operations.

Though disappointed so far, Napoleon considered the game by no means hopeless. Villeneuve had but to persevere in trying to reach the Channel, and there remained some chances. The object was so immense, that there should be no room for despair. If the whole French navy sank, the cause of France would be no worse off than if the ships remained forever idly in port. But Villeneuve had no power to rise to the Emperor's vast conceptions. His own difficulties and the dangers to his own force filled his field of view, and hid from his eyes the

great stake for which Napoleon was playing. On the 13th of August he put to sea with 29 ships, and met the old head wind — the Portuguese trade. On the 15th a passing merchantman informed him that three strange ships to windward belonged to a fleet of 25 sail, beyond the horizon. Forgetting his master's orders, he despairingly bore up for Cadiz. Collingwood retired on his approach so skillfully that it was impossible to reach him, without being forced into the Mediterranean by the in-draught of the constant easterly current. Villeneuve entered Cadiz August 20th. By the 22d Collingwood was reinforced to 8 ships by detachments from inside the Mediterranean; and on the 30th Calder arrived with 18, with which he had been sent by Cornwallis to look out for Villeneuve, wherever he could find him. Collingwood thus had 26 ships.

Napoleon then at last threw up the game, so far as the invasion of England went, and began the campaign against Austria, which resulted in Austerlitz on December 2. The situation now — on August 30 — was: in Cadiz 35 allies, before Cadiz 26 British; in Brest 21 French, before Brest 17 British; and as the Rochefort squadrons, a step back, so now those of Brest may be dismissed from our thought. The strategy of the campaign has, as the usual and natural result, concentrated the interest upon a single point, the tactical field about Cadiz. Of the 35 allied ships in Cadiz, 33 could be made ready for sea. The 26 British were raised by successive reinforcements to 33, of which Nelson, especially dispatched from England, took command on the 28th of September. As, however, he could not know when the enemy might come out, and it was necessary to keep his fleet in full efficiency for any movement, he was compelled to send divisions to Tetuan, inside the Straits, for water. Thus only 27 were with him on October 19, when the allies began to come out.

This determined the relative forces engaged — Allies, 33 : British, 27.

Nelson's dispositions antecedent to the battle were dominated by two leading ideas as to the enemy's intentions. First, he anticipated, from past experience, that they would seek to avoid action; second, he believed they were bound into the Mediterranean. Therefore, the first move he expected to make was to throw himself across the entrance of the Straits. He could not venture, however, to take that position beforehand; for either a prolonged calm, or a heavy westerly gale combined with the in-draught, would force him into the Mediterranean. It was better, he told Collingwood, who had kept closer in, to be too far west than too far east. Moreover, he feared that if Villeneuve knew his full force, he would never come out. Every pains was consequently taken to conceal the arrival of each fresh ship. No salutes were allowed, and the main body, of 23 ships-of-the-line, cruised fifty miles west of Cadiz. Close in with the port was a squadron of frigates and light cruisers. Some fifteen or twenty miles outside them were 2 ships-of-the line, and at the same distance beyond, another division of 2 plied back and forth within fixed limits. Provision was thus made for an almost immediate transmittal of intelligence from end to end of a line fifty miles long.

Nelson knew nothing of the great movement from the Rhine to the Danube, with which Napoleon had begun already the campaign of Ulm and Austerlitz; but he had rightly divined that the Emperor destined his fleet to the Mediterranean. There operations undertaken, or threatened, against the south of Italy, were intended to act as a diversion in favor of the main campaign. Orders to that effect reached Villeneuve on the 27th of September. Buffeted by adverse fortune, and depressed beyond measure by failure, this most unfortunate of admirals found in

himself no strength to remonstrate with the imperious sovereign whom he had dared before to disobey. He announced his intention to comply; but his final movement was precipitated by the news that a successor was on the way, and that he himself was to be recalled under charges and in disgrace.

In the early morning of October 19, the allied fleets began to get underway with a light land breeze. Day-break, wrote an eye-witness on board the inshore squadron, — Hercules Robinson, father of the Lord Rosmead of whom we have lately heard much in connection with South Africa, — day-break “of the 19th found us and our inshore squadron so close to Cadiz as to see the ripple on the beach, and catch the morning fragrance as it came off the land; and then, as the sun rose over the Trocadero, with what joy we saw the fleet inside let fall and hoist their topsails, and one after another emerge slowly from the harbor’s mouth. Before noon they had formed a long line of nearly six miles in length, standing under easy sail to the westward.” In this last statement Robinson illustrates, what I fancy is familiar to all students of historical testimony, that men’s minds are retentive of small, especially personal, matters, and apt to confuse those of greater moment. Owing to failure of wind, only eight ships got out on the 19th; but the movement was resumed on the 20th, and that day the whole fleet did get out, and did stand to the westward. The commanding officer of the frigates, Blackwood, at once sent off a brig to Tetuan for the absent division of 6 ships, and at the same time started the chain of signals to let Nelson know the news he longed for. At 10 A.M. Nelson received the message, and at once signaled to move towards Cape Spartel, on the African coast. The wind was so light that it was not till the following morning that the fleet was close in with the Straits. Meantime the weather

had changed, with indications of one of those vendavals — on-shore winds — from the southward and westward, which torment the seaman in those regions. Nelson anticipated that it would drive the enemy back to Cadiz. “It blows so very fresh and thick weather,” he wrote to Lady Hamilton, “that I rather believe they will go into the harbor before night;” and the more so that “a group of them was seen off the lighthouse of Cadiz this morning,” which shows that Robinson must have been mistaken in saying that they had got to sea the day before. Between 7 and 8 one of Blackwood’s frigates reported that the enemy bore north. The British fleet then put their heads north-west — wind south-south-west. The allies continued to steer west, because the wind as it was would not permit them on the other tack to clear the shoals off Cape Trafalgar. At 2 P.M. on the 20th, however, the wind shifted to west-north-west, and the weather cleared partially. The allies then at once went about, and headed to the southward, to open the Straits. The British continued north till 8 P.M., when they wore to the south-west, and so continued till 4 A.M. when they again wore to the northward; Nelson’s intention evidently being to keep to windward of enemy, reserving thus the power to attack.

When daylight made on the morning of October 21, the day of the battle, the fleets were in sight of each other, the allies ten or fifteen miles west of Cape Trafalgar, the British ten miles west of them. As is frequent during a vendaval, which sometimes lasts with intermissions for a fortnight, the wind had lulled during the night, and now, and throughout the day, gave barely steerage way. The allies were drawn up in the traditional order of battle, — a long line, ship following ship, their broadsides being intended to present a consecutive unbroken array like the walls of a fortification; but

actually, in this case, from want of skill or want of wind, the vessels were irregularly disposed, — some overlapping, some too far apart. Moreover, instead of every ship being ranged nearly upon a straight line, drawn from the van to the rear ship, the center had sagged to leeward, so that the order was crescent-shaped.

Collingwood remarked on this in his report. Whether Nelson noted it does not appear; but there is no reason to think that he saw in it any substantial departure from the arrangement he had expected, — the customary line of battle, somewhat disorganized. His own plan, to act against it, was extremely simple in conception. The whole of the British fleet was to be thrown on two-thirds of the enemy, the center and the rear. If, however, the enemy reversed his order after the attack was combined, no change was to be made. The former rear — become the van — and the center should still be the objects of attack. The distinguishing peculiarity, and in my mind the distinctive merit of Nelson at Trafalgar, was that he attacked in columns, — as the diagram shows, — and not in line, as there seems every reason to believe he had first intended. That is, I find his great merit, not in his first general plan, for that, although quite admirable, was not absolutely novel, but in the *promptitude* with which he adopted the very unusual course, at sea in those days, of bearing down “in order of sailing,” as the expression was, instead of in a line of bearing. In the latter, the usual course, the ships while advancing maintained their line parallel to the enemy, continued all equally distant from him, and so came into action together. This gave mutual support, and if carried out according to Nelson’s plan would bring his ships upon the part of the enemy designated for attack in the proportion of three to two, or four to three (about). The advance in columns is quite different. It exposes — nay, invites — to concentration by the enemy upon the

heads of the columns, — an immense hazard ; but, on the other hand, if successfully carried out, it brings every ship of the assailant on a very limited part of the defendant's order, breaking it into two or more fragments, which may be separately dealt with, and can no longer support each other. Therefore it gives the greater result ; but, as is always the case, a heavier price, either in risk or in actual loss, is paid for a better article.

All this Nelson understood of course ; but his choice of the method depended not upon preference for it, but upon the emergency of the moment, the power of a great leader to take instantly a great risk for an adequate end. The attack in line would have given all the local superiority he wanted : three British to two allies were more than enough in his estimation ; but, with so light a wind, the attempt to bring and keep the ships in line would tie all down to the speed of the slowest, and the opportunity might be lost. By advancing in column the fastest ships led, the goal could be reached by them in time, the hostile line pierced, and the slower ships, having practically the same distance to go as their predecessors, would cover the ground in their own time and finish the work. I by no means imply that Nelson's adoption of this method of attack was a sudden inspiration. From the wording of his order prescribing the general plan, I am convinced he had this always in the background of his mind, as something he might be compelled to resort to ; for he began that order with the words, "Thinking it almost impossible to bring a fleet of forty sail (the number he then hoped to have) into a line of battle in variable winds, and other circumstances which must occur, without such loss of time that the opportunity would probably be lost of bringing the enemy to battle in such a manner as to make the business decisive." This was exactly what occurred on the day of Trafalgar ; and Nelson was ready, not merely

because of a sudden inspiration, but because he had considered diligently every contingency, and had provided in his mind a remedy therefor.

At daybreak the French line was heading south; but Villeneuve, seeing himself baffled in the attempt to reach the Straits without fighting, determined to retreat towards Cadiz, that he might have the port open under his lee in case of the defeat which he expected, and in any event as a refuge for ships which must be disabled. At 6.30, therefore, the allies began to wear in succession; and by 10 they were about on the other tack, heading north. Nelson saw this with concern; for instead of the open Straits, Gibraltar, and the Mediterranean, to receive crippled British vessels, it gave them a hostile lee shore, and, even worse, the off-lying shoals of Trafalgar. He made, therefore, the signal for the fleet to be ready to anchor before the close of the day, and then signaled Collingwood, who was leading the other column, that he himself should incline to the northward, to counteract the movement of the enemy in that direction.

This, then, was the way the battle joined,—the Allies in a crescent-shaped order, the chord of the crescent about north and south, five miles long; against which the British advanced in two columns, steering a little north of west, the northern or left-hand column consisting of 12 ships led by Nelson in the *Victory*, the right-hand — southern — column of 15 ships, headed by Collingwood in the *Royal Sovereign*. The latter division has been called commonly the *lee line*; lee because the wind was from north of west, and line because column was not then in use as a technical naval term.

Thus the attack; the battle as fought divides into two principal stages.

1. The allied center and rear, 23 ships, beginning with the 11th ship from their van, were cut off, pierced,



and brought to action successively, by superior forces of the British, according to Nelson's plan; 2. The ten ships of the allied van, about two hours after the battle began, attempted to come to the help of the center and rear; an attempt which failed entirely, as will be shown. What followed was simply the retreat of the surviving allies to the refuge in Cadiz, which Villeneuve's last manœuvre insured them.

The wind, at daybreak a three-knot breeze, gradually failed, till at last the ships were moving only a mile and a half an hour, under all sail that could be set. The battle began at noon, when the allies fired their first guns at Collingwood's ship. To this no reply could be made; heading as the columns were, their guns did not bear. They continued to advance silently, and ten minutes later the lee column closed with the enemy; Collingwood's ship breaking through the allied line in the rear of the *Santa Ana*, the flag-ship of a Spanish vice-admiral. The vessels following Collingwood inclined successively a little to the right, as opportunity required, the weight of their first impact falling upon the 18th and following ships in the allied order. Everything now depended upon the discretion of each captain, availing himself of the conditions as he came up, but following out Nelson's general injunction that the effort of this column should be towards the rear—that is in this case the right—of the enemy. One of these officers, Captain Codrington of the *Orion*, has left us a brief account of his own proceeding. It will be noted that owing to the lightness of the winds the rear ships did not come up till two hours after the battle began. The *Orion* was over an hour late. Codrington says:

“We all scrambled into battle as soon as we could. I was in the middle of it before I fired a gun. When our own length from a wounded Frenchman I gave leave to

fire, carried away his masts, and made him strike. We then passed on to Gravina's ship — but we could not get within three cables length of him — meeting now and then a French, now and then a Spanish, ship with whom we exchanged fire. At length, after a continued fire against a kind of reserved line they had formed, I found an opportunity of assisting the *Leviathan*, which had just beaten the Spanish *San Agostino*, and was galled by the French *Intrepide* (one bold one out of their shy van). It was all confusion when the *Orion* and the *Ajax* (next ahead) arrived." "After passing the dismasted *Santa Ana*," he tells another correspondent, "on the larboard side, besides three of our ships and some of the enemy's all lumped together on our starboard bow, we passed close to the *Victory* with three other ships all aboard one another and firing at the same time." From these accounts it is clear that the *Orion*, which was third from the rear of Nelson's column, passed through the allied line where Collingwood's flag-ship had done so. This was due to the northerly movement of the allies as a body, despite the light wind and loss of sails. When through, her captain turned her head north, as is evident from his passing the *Victory* and engaging the *Intrépide*, one of the allied van that was passing to the rear of the fight, and to leeward of it.

I mention these facts of Codrington's experience, and my inferences therefrom, to illustrate how possible it is, even in such seemingly inextricable confusion, by a careful comparison of data, to ascertain and fix the general character of the movements. I shall not attempt to trouble you, however, with any more than the salient features.

The *Victory*, heading the other column, pierced the enemy's line twenty-five minutes after Collingwood. She passed astern of the 12th ship, choosing this place because Nelson believed — rightly — that this was the flagship of

Villeneuve, the allied commander-in-chief; but he was not able to carry out his purpose of engaging her further, because the enemy's ships beyond were so close that the Victory could not round-to, and come alongside. She therefore ran aboard one of them, and took her out of the line. The British Temeraire followed, and widened the breach; so that the three next British vessels threw themselves upon Villeneuve, and upon the ship next ahead of him, the Spanish Santísima Trinidad, which two, first raked and then outnumbered, were soon reduced to comparative impotence. Villeneuve's flagship struck at 2.05, an hour and a half after Nelson had raked her. Nelson had fallen mortally wounded half an hour before this.

The van of the allies, 10 ships, were thus wholly cut off from the center, the 3 leading ships of the latter being annihilated, and the British column, so far as it had arrived, occupying the ground there and to leeward. Three or four British ships were still out of action, coming up. The isolation of the van was increased by the fact that several of the allied center had run down toward the rear. This movement, and the confusion inevitably attendant upon the obscurity from smoke, and upon the partial and total loss of spars, rendering the movements of ships unequal, had now made the battlefield something of a *mêlée*. The great general feature prescribed by Nelson still existed, all the British against two-thirds of the enemy; but superficially the scene was chaos. The appearance of this smoke-shrouded *mêlée* to an external witness is simply but graphically conveyed in the log of the rear ship of Nelson's column, the Spartiate, which for two hours surveyed the scene in peace.

"Noon, light breezes and hazy. P. M. Light winds with a swell from the westward. 12.09 H. M. Ship Royal Sovereign, Vice-Admiral Collingwood, commenced the action with the enemy's center, having cut through

their line. 12.32 observed the ship the Royal Sovereign was engaging (the Santa Ana) had her mizen topmast shot away. 12.59 H. M. Ship Victory (Vice-Admiral Lord Nelson Commander-in-Chief) commenced firing at a ship ahead of her, she then bearing down on the Santissima Trinidad and a French two-decker with a flag to the fore. 1.04 the Tonnant lost her fore topmast and mainyard. 1.05 the Victory lost her mizen topmast. 1.07 a Spanish two-decker struck to the Tonnant. 1.19 a Spanish two-decker's mizenmast fell. 1.24 observed one of our three-decker's (supposed to be the Temeraire) main topsail yard shot away. 1.25 the Santa Ana struck to the Royal Sovereign, she then making sail ahead to the next ship. 1.36 the Temeraire lost her main topmast. 1.39 the Santa Ana rolled over all her lower masts. 1.42 the French Admiral struck to the Victory. 1.45 came on board a lieutenant from H. M. Ship Euryalus, with orders to engage wherever we could with most effect. 1.49 observed the Tonnant had wore, and had lost her main topmast, an enemy's ship being on board her on the quarter. 1.59 observed a Spanish two-decker, who was engaged by the Neptune, lose her main and mizen masts. 2.25 observed Santissima Trinidad's main and mizen masts go by the board, then engaged by the Neptune and Conqueror, the Africa raking a French two-decker. 2.30 the Spanish two-decker which had struck to the Neptune lost her foremast and bowsprit. 2.37 the San Trinidad lost her foremast and bowsprit. 2.40 the Royal Sovereign lost her main and mizen masts. 2.45 one of the enemy's two-decker's lost her main and mizen masts. 2.57 cut away our lower and topmast studdingsails, observing the van of the enemy's ships had wore to form a junction with their center. At three hailed the Minotaur to allow us to pass ahead of her, hauled our wind to prevent the enemy's design, five of them bore up, and five of them

kept their wind to engage us in the Minotaur, four French and one Spanish. At 3.07 the Minotaur and Spartiate commenced close action with their headmost ship; received and returned the fire of the five ships, with our topsails to the mast, occasionally making sail to pass the enemy's ships that had struck."

Such was the vivid picture the contest presented from outside. Let us now hear the yet more vivid and tremendous experiences of one who passed through the hottest of the fight — a young lieutenant of marines, consequently a comparatively unoccupied witness, of the Belleisle, 80-gun ship, which followed next after Collingwood.

"It was just twelve o'clock when we reached their line. Our energies became roused, and the mind diverted from its appalling condition, by the order of 'Stand to your guns!' which, as they successively came to bear, were discharged into our opponents on either side; but as we passed close under the stern of the Santa Ana, of 112 guns, our attention was more strictly called to that ship. Although until that moment we had not fired a shot, our sails and rigging bore evident proofs of the manner in which we had been treated; our mizentopmast was shot away, and the ensign had been thrice rehoisted; numbers lay dead upon the decks, and eleven wounded were already in the surgeon's care. The firing was now tremendous; and at intervals the dispersion of the smoke gave us a sight of the colors of our adversaries.

"At this critical period, while steering for the stern of L'Indomptable (our masts and yards and sails hanging in the utmost confusion over our heads), which continued a most galling raking fire upon us, the Fougoux being on our starboard quarter, and the Spanish San Juste on our larboard bow, the Master earnestly addressed the Captain 'Shall we go through, sir?' 'Go through, by ——!' was his energetic reply. 'There's your ship, sir, place me

close alongside of her.' Our opponent defeated this manœuvre by bearing away in a parallel course with us within pistol shot.

"About one o'clock the Fougex ran us on board on the starboard side; and we continued thus engaging until the latter dropped astern. Our mizenmast soon went, and soon afterwards the maintopmast. A two-decked ship, the Neptune, 80, then took a position on our bow, and a 74, the Achille, on our quarter. At two o'clock the mainmast fell over the larboard side. I was at the time under the break of the poop, aiding in running out a carronade, when a cry of 'Stand clear there! here it comes!' made me look up, and at that instant the mainmast fell over the bulwarks just above me. This ponderous mass made the ship's whole frame shake, and had it taken a central direction it would have gone through the poop and added many to our list of sufferers. At half-past two our foremast was shot away close to the deck. In this unmanageable state we were but seldom capable of annoying our antagonists, while they had the power of choosing their distance, and every shot from them did considerable execution. We had suffered severely, as must be supposed; and those on the poop were now ordered to assist at the quarterdeck guns, where we continued until the action ceased. Until half-past three we remained in this harassing situation. The only means at all in our power of bringing our battery towards the enemy, was to use the sweeps out of the gunroom ports; to these we had recourse, but without effect, for even in ships under perfect command they prove almost useless, and we lay a mere hulk covered with wreck and rolling with the swell.

"At this hour a three-decked ship was seen apparently steering towards us; it can easily be imagined with what anxiety every eye turned towards this formidable object, which would either relieve us from our unwelcome neigh-

bours or render our situation desperate. We had scarcely seen the British colours since one o'clock, and it is impossible to express our emotion as the alteration of the stranger's course displayed the white<sup>1</sup> ensign to our sight. We did not, however, continue much longer in this dilemma, for soon the Swiftsure came nobly to our relief. Can any enjoyment in life be compared with the sensation of delight and thankfulness which such a deliverance produced? On ordinary occasions we contemplate the grandeur of a ship under sail with admiration; and even to those whose profession makes them familiar with such sights, this wonderful production of art seldom fails to attract general notice; but under impressions of danger and excitement, such as prevailed at this crisis, every one eagerly looked towards our approaching friend, who came speedily on, and when within hail manned the rigging, cheered, and then boldly steered for the ship which had so long annoyed us."

From one learn all. Infinitely various in details, the features of the experience of every ship are outlined in these recollections. Admiral Robinson, then a midshipman of the *Euryalus*, and therefore in a position to pick up much of the floating anecdote of the fleet, tells a most amusing story which, though he forbears names, I have satisfied myself belongs to this same gallant captain Hargood, whose conduct you have just heard.

"A fine old sailor of the past day, as brave as Cæsar, but whose commentaries, if he had written them, might not have been quite so good (as the schoolmaster had not gone abroad in his youth) commanded a ship-of-the-line at Trafalgar; and pushing, as he would be sure to do, into the thickest of the fight, had two or three enemy's ships belaboring him at the same time. The *sauve-tête* or splinter-netting, was cut away, and having knocked him

<sup>1</sup> British.

down, entangled him in the meshes. On getting clear, stunned and excited by the blow, he cried out: ‘Let un come on, let un come on; let a dozen on un come on — I’m blowed if I strikes — I’ll never strike, no, never to nobody whatsomdever —;’ and a most effective speech this was. It was heard on one deck, and repeated on the others in the pauses of the firing, and the hearty guffaw with which it was received was more exhilarating than any amount of blank verse.”

Let us return now from this digression to lighter episodes, and briefly resume the analysis of the battle, viz., the second stage and the retreat of the allies.

Before Villeneuve ordered the flag of his own ship hauled down he had directed a boat manned to carry himself to a yet valid ship, probably one of the van, in which he could renew the fight. Not a boat, however, could float, so he had to remain, but before surrendering made signal for ships not engaged to take position where they could best annoy the enemy. This summoned the ten van ships. With great difficulty these got their heads to the southward, but instead of keeping together, they separated. Two kept broad off to leeward, and three hauled up to leeward, standing south. These last fell in with the rear ships of the weather British column, and yielded some prizes to it. The five remaining of the van — four French and one Spaniard — kept to windward of the field of battle, heading to pass near the Victory. The rear two ships of the British column were still to windward, the *Minotaur* and the *Spartiate*. By order from the Victory they hauled to the wind, interposing their batteries between her and the new enemies. It was in the following exchange of broadsides that Nelson uttered the words: “O Victory! Victory! how you distract my poor brain!” The five allies slid slowly by; but as they did so the two British ships managed to intercept the



Spaniard, and forced her to surrender. The four French ships kept out to sea and for the moment escaped.

Firing continued till 4.30 P. M., when the Spanish vice-admiral, Gravina, become commander-in-chief by Villeneuve's capture, retreated upon Cadiz. Ten other ships accompanied him, making, with the four French that escaped to sea, fifteen sail that survived the battle. The other eighteen remained prizes to the victor; one, the Achilles, 74, being then in flames and soon afterwards blowing up.

"How well I remember," writes Robinson, "the situation of the fleet as evening drew on — a cluster of crippled hulks, preparing as they best might to weather a night, of which an angry sunset and moaning of the wind gave an ill promise; while the hero who had led us to victory slept the sleep that knows no waking in the cockpit of his well-named ship. How well I remember the Achilles, French 74, blowing up, and our getting hold of a dozen of her men, who had been hoisted into the air by the exploding ship, cursing their fate, *sacrééng*, tearing their hair, and wiping the gunpowder and salt water from their faces; and how in the evening these same fellows, having got their supper and grog and dry clothes, were dancing for the amusement of our men under the half-deck."

"How well," he continues, with a saving sense of the humour, which walks in and out while tragedy holds the stage, "I remember the black pig which swam to us from the burning ship, and how I assisted in saving piggy-wiggy, and what a glorious supper of pork chops appeared that evening in the midshipmen's berth."

I am not, I suppose, the first to note that the battle of Trafalgar was fatal to the commanders-in-chief of the three nations represented on the field. Nelson's death is familiar to all. Gravina, the Spanish commander, who had nobly fought a losing battle, died of his wounds a few

months later. Villeneuve, no less brave, died by his own hand after his return to France, overwhelmed with despair at the failure of the great enterprise intrusted to him, and at the burden of blame for it laid upon his shoulders. Judged as an admiral, he merits undoubtedly the censure that must fall on one who has assumed a great responsibility, and proved himself unequal; but as a man he is one of those expiatory victims, whom History from time to time offers up to the demands of an inexorable destiny. Brave, accomplished, self-devoted, but unutterably weak, to him, as things stand, must be attributed the failure of Napoleon's great design of invading England. That even in the hands of a Nelson failure might have followed, is nothing to the point. Villeneuve failed in conduct, and failed to obey orders to the uttermost. For this he cannot be excused; but what heart can withstand the wail of his parting letter to his wife: "Blighted by the anathema of the Emperor, repulsed by his minister, who was my friend, burdened with the immense responsibility of a disaster which is laid on my shoulders, and to which fatality has dragged me, I must die. Thou, I trust, wilt find in religion a peace of mind that is denied to me. Farewell. I had wished to finish this, but I cannot. What a happiness that I have no child to reap my terrible inheritance, and to be crushed with the weight of my name. I was not born for such a part. I did not seek it, I was drawn into it, in my own despite. Farewell!"

THE FIGHT BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTION  
AND THE JAVA.

BY

LIEUT. JOHN C. SOLEY.

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## THE CONSTITUTION AND THE JAVA.

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IN order to understand fully the merits of the early actions of the war of 1812, it is necessary to notice for a moment the policy of the naval administration during the period preceding the war, and the condition of the navy when the war broke out. The navy of that day and of the present really dates from 1794, when an act of Congress provided for the building of six frigates, to check the depredations of Algerine corsairs.

The old Revolutionary navy had entirely passed out of existence; and though some of the senior officers of the new ships were selected from among the well-known Revolutionary names, they were men who had been for ten years in private life, and their juniors had never before seen any naval service. Selected hastily, most of them in the course of a few months, the corps of officers was necessarily an ill-trained and unwieldy body; and Morris tells us in his autobiography how imperfect the selection was. Algiers gave the new navy nothing to do; but, fortunately for the service, the energetic action of the Congress of 1798, in declaring reprisals upon French armed vessels, gave it active and salutary occupation. By the autumn of 1798 nearly the whole fleet, composed of all the frigates that were ready, and many other vessels, numbering altogether about twenty, were cruising in the West Indies, where they remained for two years. In 1801, the Peace Establishment Act, by reducing the number of officers in all grades, while it operated severely upon some of the veterans, nevertheless proved of substantial benefit in winnowing the service of most of the

chaff that had entered in 1798. The officers who remained, and who formed the nucleus of the modern navy, comprised a large number of able men, most of them young men, who were animated by an intense *esprit de corps* and ambition for the profession, and who later developed an extraordinary aptitude for it. All that they needed was training in active service, and a field for the exercise of their undeveloped powers. This came to them in the Tripolitan War, which occupied the navy for four years. It gave the junior officers the best possible training, under such able commanders as Dale, Rodgers, and Preble; and the eagerness with which they seized every opportunity for winning fame for the service shows the zest with which they had entered the profession.

The foreign policy of the administration during the next few years was one of peace and self-abnegation. The wars of Napoleon were then at their height, and the United States suffered the humiliations of a timid neutral between two unscrupulous belligerents. This timidity arose not so much from the weakness of the state as from the weakness of parties. The naval campaign against France in 1798 had been very successful, as were subsequently the naval campaigns against England in 1812, and a bold policy might have led to a like success in 1805. But, unfortunately, the rivalry of France and England was reflected at home. The federalists would not hear of a war with England, nor the anti-federalists of hostilities with France; and though the former were generally the advocates of a spirited foreign policy, yet their indignation was never very marked upon a question of English aggression,—and John Quincy Adams tells us that he abandoned his party because it resented the outrage on the Chesapeake in so lukewarm a fashion.

When Congress met, late in 1811, a strong war-party of younger men obtained the control of affairs. Though

both nations had committed aggressions, and though France was far less capable of effective hostilities, the old antipathy of the anti-federalist party for Great Britain directed the energies of the new movement chiefly against that power. For this, there was some excuse, in that France had latterly made a show of concession, to which England, more candid and direct in her negotiations, had failed to respond. The relations with England were, moreover, complicated by the grievance of impressment. The dominant party carried everything before it, and on the 18th of June, 1812, war was declared against Great Britain.

During all this period when a rupture often seemed imminent, little was done to improve the navy. The last vessels of any size that were added to it were the brig *Hornet* in 1805 (later altered to a sloop), and the sloop-of-war *Wasp* in 1806, rating 18 guns each. The remaining efforts of the naval administration were devoted to the building of gunboats.

Attention was first directed to this species of war-vessel by their success in the operations before Tripoli. For special services, such as that for which Preble employed them, as auxiliary to larger vessels in flotilla-engagements in shoal waters, and for attacking the picaroons and other piratical craft that infested the West Indies, they were no doubt of some use. But Jefferson's idea—and it was peculiarly his idea—was to transform the navy into a fleet of gunboats, to do away with the frigates and, if the country became involved in war, to make it a defensive war solely. It was claimed for the gunboats that, together with fortifications, they would be the best protection for coasts and harbors, the mouths of rivers, and shoal waters in general. This scheme of defense was a part of the isolating policy of the government,—a policy which sought to draw the nation in upon itself, to sur-

round it with barriers, to destroy intercourse and commerce with the rest of the world, and to repel attack by means of forts, embargoes, and prohibitions on importation.

During Jefferson's administration, Congress was ready to carry out the plan to its fullest extent. In 1806 and 1807 over a million of dollars were expended in the building of gunboats. The materials for six ships-of-the-line, which had been accumulated during Adams's administration, were devoted to the same object. One hundred and seventy-six gunboats were built and distributed in the bays and harbors; and the ablest of the older lieutenants were placed in command of flotillas, to enforce the embargo at the different ports, and to suppress the commerce they were commissioned to protect.

In 1809, upon a change of Presidents, Congress made an examination of the working of the system, and it was found that the one hundred and seventy-six gunboats in the service had cost \$1,800,000. The cost of the frigate *President*, mounting 56 guns, armament and all, was \$220,000. Hence the money that was wasted on the gunboats would have built eight first-class frigates; frigates which the British authorities always asserted were equal to small line-of-battle-ships. It was also found that the annual cost of a frigate carrying 56 guns was \$120,000, while that of fifty-six gunboats carrying one gun each was \$650,000.

These figures put an end to the gunboat system. No more were built, and during the next three years they consumed the revenue without giving any proof of usefulness. In March, 1812, an act was passed directing that they should all be put out of commission. During the war the government got rid of them as rapidly as it could; and finally only three remained in the service, the rest having been sold for about one-tenth of their original cost.



During this period the navy proper, apart from the gunboats, maintained a precarious existence. The government did not look upon it with favor, and its administration was none of the best. In 1806 Congress fixed the number of seamen to be employed at nine hundred and twenty-five ; not enough to man three frigates. The affair of the Chesapeake in 1807 was used as an argument for the abolition of the navy, on the ground that foreign nations would not inflict insults upon our ships of war if we had no ships of war to be insulted. Though foreign relations grew more and more complicated, the same arguments, or unreasoning denunciations, were repeated year by year in the debates on the appropriation bill. In 1808, in a debate upon increasing the force in commission, a representative from South Carolina said that he was at a loss to find terms sufficiently expressive of his abhorrence of a navy. He would go a great deal further to see it burned than to extinguish the fire. It was a curse to the country, and never had been anything else. He had always voted against these high federal measures, and he thanked God he had now an opportunity to vote against them again.

Strange as it may seem, these words represented the general opinion of the majority in Congress. The "abhorrence" was a matter of party discipline and party education. So strong was the hostility to the navy that it is almost a wonder that the service was not abolished. But it found some defenders, men, who, though in the minority, were not to be silenced by the partisans and intriguers who at that time controlled the legislature. It is a fact to be remembered by the navy that in this period, when it was threatened with annihilation, it was ably and courageously supported by three statesmen from Massachusetts, by James Lloyd in the Senate, and by Josiah Quincy and Joseph Story in the House. Partly through

their efforts, an act was passed early in 1809 directing the fitting out of the President, United States, Essex and John Adams; and authorizing the preparation of the other ships, the appointment of three hundred midshipmen, and the employment of three thousand six hundred additional men. In the debate upon the bill, Quincy said, "I have been a close observer of what has been said and done by a majority of this House, and for one I am satisfied that no insult, however gross, could force this majority into a declaration of war. To use a strong but common expression, they could not be kicked into a war. What has this majority actually done during the two years in which the people have been kept in daily anticipation of war, toward the maintenance of our rights? We have built one hundred and seventy gunboats, and we have a hundred thousand militia in requisition. Do we mean to fight Great Britain with these? Are they competent to maintain our maritime rights?" In the same debate Story recommended an increase of the navy by the construction of fifty fast frigates. In reply to the objection that they would all be captured, he said, "I was born among the hardy sons of the ocean, and I cannot so doubt their courage or their skill. If Great Britain ever obtains possession of our present little navy, it will be at the expense of the best blood of the country, and after a struggle that will call for more of her strength than she has ever found necessary for a European enemy." These predictions were amply fulfilled.

The Act which followed this debate and one passed in March of the same year (1809) to augment the Marine Corps were the last measures taken for the increase of the navy before the outbreak of the war. For three years, with the prospect of war staring it in the face, Congress did nothing in the way of preparation, not even during the long session of 1812, when the leaders were

resolved to bring about hostilities. This was not from apathy or want of interest, but from an active spirit of opposition to what the party had been taught to look upon as a "high federal measure." In this very last year, though the naval committee recommended ten new frigates, Congress only appropriated enough money to fit out the Chesapeake, Constellation, and Adams; and, as if a war with Great Britain meant a desultory conflict for half a century, it provided for an expenditure of \$200,000 annually, for three years, towards rebuilding three or four of the small frigates, too rotten to be repaired. With such encouragement the navy went into war!

At the outbreak of the war the United States Navy, exclusive of gunboats, was composed of twenty-one vessels, of which fourteen were in commission. Of the other seven, one was on Lake Ontario, three were repairing, and three were beyond repair. Of the fourteen in commission, there were three frigates of 44 guns, one of 38, one of 32, and one of 28; while the rest were sloops, brigs and schooners, carrying from 10 to 18 guns each.

On the other hand, there were in the British Navy at the beginning of the year 1812, two hundred and thirty-six ships-of-the-line, of from 60 to 120 guns each, and six hundred and fifty-nine vessels of the class of frigates and smaller. These figures represent all the ships in the navy; of those actually in commission for sea service there were one hundred and two ships-of-the-line, and four hundred and eighty-two frigates and smaller cruisers.

The enormous disparity between our own navy and that of the enemy struck the government so forcibly at the outbreak of the war, that it was decided at Washington to lay up all the ships in commission. This was the logical extension of the administration policy. It was a self-denying measure of the same character as the embargo.

It was founded upon the assumption that, as the enemy's force was overwhelming, it would be futile for us to keep up any force at all. The war-policy of the government seemed to be to make a declaration and to scare the enemy with bluster, if possible, but to avoid any formidable preparations which would lead their adversary to a vigorous pursuit of the war. Our safeguard and shelter from the resentment of foreign powers was to lie in their contempt, — a feeling which it was our interest studiously to cultivate. In applying this policy to the navy the Cabinet was overruled by the President who had only been persuaded to change his mind by the earnest remonstrances of Bainbridge and Stewart.

Under these circumstances little or nothing was expected from the navy, and so it was that when, in the first eight months, three British frigates and three brigs or sloops-of-war were captured in engagements with single ships, the country was taken by surprise and was ready to believe in the invincibility of American men-of-war. Accounts were distorted and exaggerated until the notion became general — a notion which prevails more or less in the popular mind to this day — that the victories of American ships during the war were won over superior force, and through the display of extraordinary prowess. As a matter of fact, however, in nearly every engagement in which we were successful, we had a decided material advantage at the start, in the number and size of the guns, in the composition and size of the crews, and in the strength and general equipment of the ships. Moreover, the crews of American ships were in many cases superior in their discipline to the English, and, above all, their skill in gunnery was far in advance of their opponents. Many of these advantages must be set down to the credit of the officers, no less than the successful handling of the ships in action. The superiority in equipment was also

largely due to the energetic and wisely-directed pressure of officers upon the naval administration. English officers, on the other hand, from long-continued success had grown slack, and the twenty years' war in Europe had exhausted the supply of good seamen, so that some of their ships on our coast were undermanned, or supplied with raw crews pressed into the service. It was therefore doubtless due to the efforts of our officers that the advantages were on our side; still, there is no denying that in most of the single engagements we had the advantage.

As our officers had been careful and judicious in preparation, so they fought their actions with courage and skill; and our naval historians only injure their cause by seeking to represent them as victories won in the face of heavy odds. As far as bringing on an engagement was concerned, the American officers were generally less ready to do so than their opponents, and rightly, for the loss of a single ship would have been a far greater calamity to the country than the loss of a dozen would have been to Great Britain.

England might readily have sacrificed twenty frigates in bringing all our ships into action, and not felt the loss seriously; while the series of actions would have extinguished our navy altogether.

Throughout the whole war American commanders followed a far more cautious system of tactics than the English, and on several occasions chose to avoid a combat with a ship nearly equal rather than risk the safety of one of our diminutive fleet. The event proved their wisdom: of the seventeen sea-going vessels that could be utilized at the beginning, ten were burnt or captured during the war. The seven that escaped, comprising the *Constitution*, *United States*, *Congress*, *Constellation*, *John Adams*, *Hornet*, and *Enterprise*, were only saved by the exercise of the greatest care and prudence.

The English mode of fighting, on the other hand, which they had learned in their wars with the French, was to attack an enemy they met, even though the odds were very much against them, and either demoralize him by a tremendous fire at close quarters or carry him by boarding. Their great superiority in discipline and training, and their wonderful solidity and tenacity generally gave them the victory. Their uniform experience had taught them to think little of manœuvring for advantages in sea-fights, and to set a far higher value upon sheer bravery and *elan* in making an attack. The Revolution of 1789, by introducing ideas of equality totally incompatible with discipline at sea, had disorganized the French navy; and, while in this condition, it received those crushing defeats from which it never recovered. In fighting with one of their ships, an enemy gained no special advantage by manœuvring — in fact, he needed none. The boldest plan was the safest; to go directly up to his antagonist, batter him for a while, and then board, if he had not already struck. Hence the tactical skill, the art of manœuvring, the quality which in land operations is called strategy or generalship, where it is the leading qualification for a great military commander, was regarded as a thing of little moment by officers of the school of St. Vincent and Nelson.

During the war of 1812, and especially at first, the English captains used the methods that had previously proved so successful: and having everything to gain by victory, and little to lose by defeat, they could afford to run greater risks than the Americans. They had learned to look upon an engagement with a larger ship as attended with little danger, and they were surprised in turn to find that the dashing tactics of European warfare were at fault. Their enemy was wary and manœuvred at a distance, using his long guns to advantage; his gunnery

was most accurate, and told at long or short range with far greater effect than their own; his tops were filled with riflemen, expert marksmen, who brought down a man at every shot. This explains the readiness with which the *Guerriere*, the *Java*, and the *Macedonian* engaged a superior force, and it explains also the rapidity and certainty of the fatal result. We cannot have too much admiration for these fine displays of courage on the part of the English captains; and we need not on that account think that the wary and cautious tactics of our own officers showed a want of bravery, for Congress by its scanty provision for the national defence had forced this policy upon them. In discussing these actions, Sir Howard Douglas, a writer of great reputation in his day, commends this quality of the American officers to the English navy in the strongest terms, under the name of *circumspection*. But Sir H. Douglas wrote after the American war. The word *circumspection*, applied in the same way in 1810, would have been regarded by Englishmen as a euphemism for cowardice. Now, it is a noteworthy fact that all our captains in the frigate actions of 1812, Bainbridge, Hull, and Decatur, whose personal courage nobody can deny, had used this *circumspection* when engaged with an inferior force, while Lawrence, in the engagement with the *Shannon* in the following summer, though he had far greater need of it, in that he was more nearly matched with his opponent, went into the action with impetuous bravery, scorned all tactical advantages, and after a gallant and bloody struggle, lost his vessel.

Not long after the beginning of the war the government had resolved to send a squadron to the south Pacific to destroy the unprotected British commerce in that quarter. With this object, on the 27th of October, shortly after the capture of the *Macedonian*, the *Essex*, under Captain Porter, left the Delaware and a few days later the Consti-

tution, now commanded by Captain Bainbridge, and the Hornet, Captain Lawrence, left Boston. The ships were to rendezvous at Bahia, and other ports on the Brazilian coast. As is well known, the Essex missed the other ships, and went on the intended cruise alone. The Constitution and Hornet reached Bahia near the end of December and the Hornet was sent in, Commodore Bainbridge remaining alone in the neighborhood of the coast.

On the 29th at 9 o'clock in the morning, as the Constitution was sailing by the wind on the port tack, the wind being from the NE. two vessels were seen in the NNE. These were the British 38-gun frigate Java, Captain Henry Lambert, and an American merchantman, a prize of the Java. The prize was cast off and sent into Bahia, but before her arrival was recaptured by the Hornet. The Constitution tacked, and the two opposing vessels now stood for each other; but after a time the Constitution, finding her signals unanswered, went about and stood to the southeast to draw the Java away from her companion which, in the distance Bainbridge mistook for a ship-of-war.

About noon the Java hauled up, steering a course parallel to the Constitution. As the morning passed away she came up rapidly and was made out to be an English frigate. At 2 P.M. the two ships were within a half a mile, the Java to windward, and the firing began. They were both sailing by the wind, in the same direction as that of the Constitution, when the enemy was first sighted. At 2.20 the Constitution wore to avoid being raked. The Java wore also and the ships being again side by side on the starboard tack, exchanged broadsides, by which the wheel of the Constitution was entirely shot away. This injury was instantly repaired. Again the Constitution wore, and the Java performing the same



manœuvre, at 2.35 passed just astern and missed an excellent opportunity of raking her opponent. At 2.40 she again passed the stern of the Constitution, and this time fired a few guns. Immediately after, the Constitution luffed up close to the Java and for a few minutes the action was spirited; here the head of the Java's bowsprit was shot away. At 2.52 the Constitution wore again and the Java, as the quickest way to get about, tacked; but after coming up in the wind, she paid off very slowly from the want of head sails. As she was in the midst of this operation the Constitution, seeing her opportunity, luffed up astern of her and gave her a raking fire; then, wearing again she resumed her course, and the Java once more got alongsidé. Here the decisive part of the engagement began. At eight minutes after 3, as Captain Lambert, foreseeing the inevitable result, was preparing to board and, with that view was bearing up towards the Constitution, the Java's foremast fell and prevented the attempt. At 3.15 the Constitution wore across the Java's bows, and brought down her maintopmast; then, luffing up to leeward of her, poured in, first her starboard and then, wearing, her port broadside. Remaining alongside in this last position, she continued a heavy fire, carrying away the gaff and spanker and finally the whole mizzenmast. Before this Captain Lambert had fallen, mortally wounded, and the command of the Java devolved on Lieutenant Henry Chads who still continued bravely defending her. Soon after four her fire ceasing and all her flags being down Bainbridge supposed she had surrendered; and then he performed the same manœuvre as in the actions of the *Guerriere* and the *Macedonian*, of hauling away from his disabled enemy and leisurely repairing his own injuries. From the remarkable similarity in the method of the three captains, Hull, Decatur, and Bainbridge, one might almost suppose it was a regulation

of the department. As in the other cases Bainbridge returned in about an hour and took up a raking position only to receive the formal surrender of his adversary. It is hardly necessary to go over all the points of resemblance between this case and the other two. The relative force in guns was about the same as in the fight with the *Guerriere*, while the crews were more nearly equal, owing to the presence on board the *Java* of a large number of supernumeraries. As far as one may judge from conflicting statements there were about four hundred and eighty officers and men on board the *Constitution*, and about one hundred less on board the *Java*. The difference in the killed and wounded was very great, the *Java* having according to one account twenty-two killed and one hundred and two wounded ; while the *Constitution* had only nine killed and twenty-five wounded. At the close of the engagement the *Java* was such a wreck that she could not be carried into port, while the *Constitution*, though she gave up her cruise in the Pacific, had no difficulty in returning to the United States.

In this engagement according to the most reliable information, the *Constitution*, rated a 44-gun frigate, carried 32 long 24's and 22 42-pdr. carronades, in all 54 guns. The *Java*, rated a 38-gun frigate, carried 28 long 18's, 2 long 12's, 2 long, 9's, 16 32-pdr. carronades, and 1 18-pdr. carronade ; in all 49 guns.

The *Constitution* carried 480 men, the *Java* 422. The action lasted one hour and 55 minutes and the *Constitution* had 9 killed and 25 wounded while the *Java* had 60 killed, 100 wounded.

The *Java* was formerly the French frigate *Renommée* and was captured off Madagascar, May 14, 1811, by the British frigate *Phœbe*, 36, after an action of several hours in which she lost 93 out of a crew of 470. Lambert, the English Captain, was a gallant fellow and lost his life

early in the action. Bainbridge, the Commodore of the Squadron, had had a chequered existence as a naval officer. He was the only man up to that time who had twice lowered the flag of the United States to the dictate of a foreign foe. Once when he commanded the *George Washington* he hauled it down in obedience to the Dey of Algiers to whom he carried tribute, and again when he ran the *Philadelphia* ashore at Tripoli and surrendered; for him victory meant everything, defeat would be ruin. This may account for the careful way in which the *Constitution* was handled, although in the end the result justified his precautions. At the same time we cannot fail to remark, that twice he was placed in jeopardy by the skilful manœuvring of the *Java*, though why the *Java* failed to take advantage of her position on those two occasions and pour in a raking fire we shall probably never know. The *Constitution* had the advantage in weight of metal, but there was not enough disparity to weigh heavily on her side. Undoubtedly the *Constitution* had a great advantage in the fact that her men had been carefully trained as gunners and they were in a high state of discipline. The most important direct result was that the *Constitution* did not make her cruise in the Pacific as contemplated, and the *Essex* was the only one of the fleet to go round the Horn.

At the outbreak of the war we had six frigates and eight small ships or brigs in commission, while upon the coast of America were three squadrons of the enemy, any one of which was a match for all of ours. On the Halifax station there were twenty-four vessels, frigates and brigs, not counting the schooners; on the Jamaica station twenty-two, and among the Leeward Islands, seventeen. And all that this immense force, more than three times the size of our own, could accomplish was the capture of one sloop-of-war, the *Wasp*, disabled after an

engagement, and three diminutive 12- and 10-gun brigs, one of which was taken by a squadron. The results more than justified the cautious tactics of our officers. It was only in a wise husbanding of resources that any result was attained; here lay the secret of an end so marvelously disproportionate to the means.

To the results of the great engagements must be added the vast number of merchantmen made prizes by privateers as well as by national cruisers. Of these over four hundred and thirty were reported in this first year, without counting recaptures, of which there were a great number. This was a loss that touched the enemy more materially, at the moment, than the capture of six men-of-war in a navy whose ships were counted by hundreds. It was only the moral significance of the great sea-fights that made them so important. For twenty years English ships had been accustomed to victory over every enemy, even in the face of heavy odds. The nation looked upon them as invincible. Upon its maritime superiority the government based pretensions which, if admitted, would have made commerce an English monopoly. Englishmen only knew of American policy and American armaments to despise them, and, when the war broke out, it gave them little concern, and it was the intention of the British government to prosecute it at leisure in the enemy's country. The capture of the *Alert* was looked upon by English officers as an accident, a thing of no moment, which was only to precede the extinction of the little American navy. The loss of the *Guerriere* astonished them for an instant, and served at least to establish the fact that the *Constitution* was something more than a "bundle of pine-boards, under a bit of striped bunting," as she had formerly been called in derision. But as loss followed loss, and capture followed capture, as they saw the *Frolic*, the *Macedonian*, the *Java*, and the *Peacock*,

successfully taken, the revulsion of feeling was tremendous. The journals and magazines were filled with letters and essays, with minute calculations aiming to show the enormous advantage possessed by the vessels they had derided. The naval administration was attacked and called upon to take more energetic measures. Ships-of-the-line were raised for the express purpose of fighting the President and the Constitution to advantage, and the squadron on the American coast was reinforced by some of the most powerful ships in the navy. As a Boston paper wittily put it, the English, in the spring of 1813, were sending out frigates to America under convoy of line-of-battle ships. But the most important effect of American victories was to show the hollowness of English pretensions to the control of the ocean. In view of the possibilities of future wars, it was idle any longer to advance the theory so arrogantly put forth by English writers, that "the frontier of England was high-water mark on every shore, and the British seas were wherever a 32-pounder could be floated."

The course of events had produced a result no less marked in America. Doubtless in the enthusiasm of the moment, circumstances were exaggerated and distorted; but however they might be presented the fact remained that American ships had beaten their enemies. The navy suddenly became the most popular branch of the public service and its popularity was redoubled by comparison with the reverses of the army, whose campaigns in the north had been one long series of almost uninterrupted disasters. The war party, the party of the democratic republicans, was now only too ready to pet and patronize the navy, which it had hitherto so steadily opposed; while the justification of the "high federal measure" of former years half reconciled the federalists to the war. As the news came of victory after victory, each one so

decisive and so unexpected, the most bitter partisan could not help feeling a glow of enthusiasm, and the country at last learned to look upon the navy as its only real protection and as the securest defence of the national honor

THE CHESAPEAKE AND THE SHANNON.

BY

COMMANDER J. GILES EATON, U.S.N.

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*Read February 6, 1894.*

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# THE CHESAPEAKE AND THE SHANNON.

AN ACTION FOUGHT IN MASSACHUSETTS BAY, JUNE 1, 1813.

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IN presenting a paper upon an action celebrated, thoroughly discussed, and carefully analyzed, as this of June 1, 1813, the writer states that the admission of new evidence from reliable eye-witnesses renders former accounts defective, and considers that the testimony thus presented will serve to convey a better idea of the battle as actually fought. Apart from this determining cause, the natural desire of the American historian to ascribe the causes to fortuitous facts having only remote effects upon the result, and the as natural desire of the British to refer all the glory so fairly earned to bravery alone, have tended to obscure the real issues.

The account of the action given by Roosevelt in his "Naval War of 1812" is so carefully edited and so fully sustained by obtainable evidence, that the present paper will follow the lines laid down by him. The deviations therefrom will be few; and such deviations will serve either to enlarge upon points merely touched upon by him, or be used for the purpose of introducing statements unpublished at the time Roosevelt wrote.

I have felt it necessary to recast the story of the action in order to present it to you in logical sequence. No references to disputed points will be made in the course of the narration, and, though authorities may be alluded to, no one authority will be followed implicitly.

Through the courtesy of John Codman Ropes, I have had access to "The Unpublished Notes of the late Com-

mander G. Raymond, R.N.," edited by Henry Raymond, D.D.; and I have availed myself of his criticisms and statements in correcting former histories. As an intelligent eye-witness and participant, his testimony is of great value. I have also examined the affidavit of Benjamin Trefethern, who was one of the crew of the Chesapeake during the battle.

A brief sketch of the previous service of the opposing commanders is here given. Both Broke and Lawrence were men who had earned their reputations in actual warfare. Both were excellent seamen, and, though their characteristic traits were widely dissimilar, each in his way was a hard fighter and a dangerous foe.

Captain P. B. V. Broke, who commanded the *Shannon* during the action, entered the British navy in 1792 as a midshipman, at the age of sixteen. He was made a lieutenant in 1795, and was promoted to a commander in 1799. He had served almost continuously afloat in the wars which convulsed Europe from the era of the French Revolution. He was gazetted to the *Shannon* in 1806, and with his frigate was ordered to the American station in 1811. He was a man of singular brevity in his correspondence, as witness his laconic "Took Chesapeake" as his account of the action. He was a rigid disciplinarian, attentive to every detail in practice, and an excellent officer in battle, cool and self possessed. He had taken his ship from latitude 80° 30' north to the tropics, and was inured to every vicissitude of the sea.

James Lawrence, commanding the *Chesapeake*, was appointed a midshipman in 1798, commissioned a lieutenant in 1802, and promoted to commander in 1811. He had distinguished himself at the action against *feluccas* off Tripoli, and in the attempt to recapture the *Philadelphia*. Decatur says of him, "there was no more dodge to him than to the mainmast." He had com-

manded the *Hornet*, with which ship he captured the *Peacock*. Much against his will he had been sent from that ship to command the *Chesapeake*. He was a man of unusual stature, fine personal appearance, quick and impetuous in his feelings, remarkably cool in critical situations, and a quarter-deck seaman who handled his ship brilliantly. A contemporary tersely sums up his characteristics by calling him "a very Bayard of the sea."

Each commander was a master of his profession. But whilst Broke was calm, patient, and indefatigably persevering, Lawrence was impatient, dashing, and impetuous. Broke hazarded his ship relying on the long and thorough training of his men. Lawrence sought the foe with a gallant courage which disdained the dictates of prudence. The two ships were fairly matched, and the handicap of want of training and incomplete organization more than sufficed to overcome any possible bravery.

As to the ships themselves, a brief comparison will show that they were very nearly equal. Both were so-called 38-gun frigates. The *Chesapeake* had a tonnage (British measurement) of 1135 tons, the *Shannon* 1066. The *Chesapeake* carried 28 long 18-pdrs. on her gun deck, the *Shannon* the same battery. On the spar deck the *Chesapeake* carried 18 32-pdr. carronades, the *Shannon* 16. In addition to these the *Chesapeake* carried on her spar deck two long 12-pdrs., one long 18-pdr., and one 12-pdr. carronade, although this last gun was not used in the action. The *Shannon* carried on her spar deck, in addition to the 32-pdr. carronades already enumerated, 3 12-pdr. carronades, four long 9's, and 1 long 6-pdr. The total number of great guns carried by the *Chesapeake* was therefore 50, and by the *Shannon* 52. The weight of the *Chesapeake's* broadside was nominally 570 pounds. Owing to the short weight of her shot, the actual weight was 542 pounds. The *Shannon's* broadside weight was

550 pounds. The difference in weight, nominal or actual, was inconsiderable.

The Chesapeake had on board 387 men and boys, the Shannon 330. This excess in complement might have been a factor in the contest, had not the frightful losses from the first two broadsides of the Shannon more than equalized the advantage. This short summary has been given to show that, as far as material resources were concerned, the two ships were fairly matched.

No comparison can be made between the relative efficiency. The Chesapeake had been only recently commissioned. She was an unpopular ship, and great difficulty had been experienced in securing her complement. The men who had recently served in her preferred the greater rewards offered by privateering, and a large proportion of her men were not only new to a man-of-war, but landsmen unaccustomed to the sea, and entirely unused to discipline. Some of the Constitution's and Chesapeake's old crews were on board, and would have been a powerful leaven had time been allowed. There is little authority for supposing that she had an unusual number of foreigners, and a critical examination of the official lists published by the Navy Department, February 24th, 1826, shows that the names were characteristically English with few exceptions. There are but six names distinctively Portuguese or Spanish, and but five men were tried by the British for being subjects of the king. Although this is probably an under-estimate it serves to show the very small percentage who were not Americans. Commander Raymond, then a mate, awaiting a lieutenant's commission, and serving on board the Shannon, states that the men captured were "all Americans," and adds, "We did not find a Portuguese in her." Some dissatisfaction existed on board the ship due to the failure to pay prize money, and Lawrence found it necessary to issue purser's

checks before going into action to quiet this disaffection. Officers and men were new to the ship, and new to each other. Every naval officer will appreciate to the full the significance of this fact. The confidence springing from dangers met and overcome together, the interdependence resulting from intercourse and drills, was utterly lacking. Of *esprit de corps* there was none. The crew had not been drilled into concerted action, and the discipline which enforces steadiness in emergencies was missing.

I fail to find that target practice of any description had been engaged in, and the organization drills had been few and of the most elementary description. Lawrence himself had commanded but a short time, and at the end of May had not despaired of being detached. The other officers were few in number, young and inexperienced. The regular first lieutenant had been detached on the eve of the engagement. Lieutenant Ludlow, who thus became the first lieutenant, was very young, and two of the other lieutenants were given acting commissions from midshipmen on May 27th. A portion of the crew were received on board the morning of the fight, and their bags and hammocks were still in the boom boats when the ship was captured. I have felt it essential to dwell at length on this point, as the result of the action depended much upon the efficient organization of the crew, and we are justified in concluding that the Chesapeake was lacking in this prime essential.

The Shannon, on the contrary, had been under the command of Captain Broke for seven years, and was noted in the British service for her proficiency in gunnery and fighting drills. James states: "From the day on which Captain Broke joined the Shannon, September 14th, 1806, her crew began to feel the effect of the captain's proficiency as a gunner, and his zeal for the service." He attended in person to the details of pointing, and in the

course of a year or two his paternal care and excellent regulations had rendered the ship's company as pleasant to command as they were dangerous to encounter. Every day, forenoon and afternoon, the men were exercised at pointing the guns, and in the use of the broadside, pike, and musket. Twice a week the crew fired at targets, and rewards were given for bull's-eyes. The men were conscious of their efficiency, and anxious to engage. The Shannon was greatly superior to other British frigates of her class in all that goes to make a fighting ship, and, as has been shown, the Chesapeake was inferior to other American frigates.

The recent losses of the *Guerriere*, *Macedonian*, and *Java* in single combat with the American frigates *Constitution* and *United States* had produced an effect upon the British mind that is now difficult to realize. The long series of victories which the British public had come to look upon as their right was broken by these overwhelming defeats. So distrustful had the Admiralty become, that they issued their famous order forbidding British frigates to engage single-handed the larger class of American ships, on the ground that the latter "in size, complement, and weight of metal, were so much superior to the so-called 38-gun British frigates, and more resembling line-of-battle ships," and enjoining the commanders "to wait for the aid of other of Her Majesty's ships, with whose assistance the enemy might be attacked with a reasonable hope of success." Croker, Secretary of Admiralty, defends this order, and adds that the success of the Shannon was a somewhat barren victory. This addition of his is not borne out by his contemporaries, and the restoration of the prestige which had seemed to desert the British colors was anything but a barren victory.

Broke, in the Shannon, had burned with the desire to

revenge the losses mentioned, and after cruising off Boston in company with the Tenedos, had embraced the first opportunity to send her cruising off Cape Sable, leaving the Shannon alone on the station.

Observing that the Chesapeake was nearly ready for sea, on June 1st he sent his manly challenge to Lawrence. As this challenge was not received in Boston until after the Chesapeake had sailed, it is not necessary to dwell upon its terms further than saying that it was a truthful and straightforward statement as to the force under his command. The directness of purpose and the simple form of the letter are in the highest degree creditable to the author. Lawrence had not prepared for an early engagement, and as late as May 27th had written to Captain Biddle of the Hornet, appointing a rendezvous off Cape Breton.

June 1st, 1813, was an unclouded summer day, with a sea smooth and a light breeze from the west-south-west. The Shannon under easy sail floated slowly down the eastern coast, and took an early look into Boston harbor from off the light. At ten o'clock her crew went to quarters and exercised at great guns without firing. This was her daily custom. She remained at quarters until eleven-thirty. The time occupied at this drill shows the care and discipline exercised even on the verge of battle.

The Chesapeake unmoored ship in the morning, and at noon got under way with the Shannon in plain sight to the eastward. At one-thirty the Chesapeake passed the light-house, and cleared ship for action, coming down under a press of canvas. At this time the Shannon bore east-south-east and was distant about eighteen miles. At three-forty the Shannon hauled by the wind, and single-reefed her topsails. At four she again bore away with her foresail hauled up, and her main-topsail shivering, in

order that the Chesapeake might come up. At four-thirty the Chesapeake fired a gun, presumably as a challenge. The wind at this time shifted to south-south-west and freshened.

Both commanders called their men aft and addressed them. Lawrence endeavored to stimulate his men by a stirring appeal to their patriotism, and concluded with the words, "Peacock her, my lads, Peacock her!", referring to his late victory.

Broke's address was devoid of any dramatic features, and filled with advice as to how they were to fight. He cautioned especially against any attempts to dismast, and concluded with an appeal to revenge their comrades on the *Guerriere*. Later, in response to a request that another ensign might be hoisted (the Chesapeake having three at her trucks), he said, "No, we have always been an unassuming ship."

At five-thirty the Shannon hoisted her jib, and filling her main-topsail hauled close by the wind, the Chesapeake being on her weather quarter and about three miles distant. The Chesapeake had in the meantime taken in her studding-sails, furled her royals, and sent those yards on deck. She now took in her top-gallantsails, and furled them, and, hauling up her foresail, was coming down very fast under topsails and jib, and was steering straight for the Shannon's starboard quarter.

Lawrence either neglected, or disdained to profit by, the opportunity of crossing the Shannon's stern and raking her with his first broadside. Lawrence was too good a quarter-deck seaman not to have recognized instantly the importance of such a tactical advantage; and his failure to profit by it must be ascribed to an over-confidence in his own powers, and contempt for his adversary. Broke was for a moment uncertain whether the Chesapeake would make a raking evolution under the Shannon's stern, or range up



on her weather quarter, and prepared to man either battery. All uncertainty was set at rest by the Chesapeake's rounding to on the weather quarter of the Shannon, exactly as the Hornet, under Lawrence, had done when engaging the Peacock. The Chesapeake, then within fifty yards of the Shannon, gave three cheers, and began the action with her musketry fire from her tops. At this instant, five-forty P.M., the Chesapeake squared her main-yard; and Lawrence, finding that his ship was still shooting ahead, shortly after put down his helm to luff, and check his headway. As the Chesapeake overlapped the Shannon, Broke, who was standing well aft, walked forward, and through his own skylight gave the order to fire as the guns bore on the second bow port of the Chesapeake. At five-fifty the Shannon's after main deck gun, No. 14, was fired, the shot striking just forward of the Chesapeake's second port. Then in quick succession from aft forward each gun, as it brought to bear, was discharged with the care and precision of a timed salute. All the guns were double shotted, and every alternate gun was charged with a keg of musket balls in addition. Simultaneously with the fire from the Shannon's third gun, the Chesapeake's bow gun was fired, and then in succession her other guns were fired as they bore. This first broadside from the Shannon was terribly destructive in its effects. Eye-witnesses stationed in the tops of the Shannon declare that the Chesapeake's upper deck was hidden from view by the storm of shot, splinters, torn hammocks from her nettings, and cut rigging, which swept from bulwark to bulwark, as though driven by the blast of a tornado.

Before the full ravages of this deadly blow had been revealed, the Chesapeake had luffed sharply. Her return broadside had been well delivered, and the numerous wounds in the Shannon's hull and spars bore testimony to

the good marksmanship for which the Americans were noted. Yet the Shannon's broadside was the more deadly, and its effects were far more decisive. Of the one hundred and fifty men stationed on the spar deck of the Chesapeake more than one hundred were laid low. Lawrence himself, fatally conspicuous, in full uniform with a white vest, was struck by a musket ball in the leg, causing a wound which bled profusely.

The Chesapeake's jib-sheet and foretopsail-tye were shot away, her tiller-ropes parted, and the men at her wheel killed. The spanker brails were cut, loosing that sail, and forcing her sharply into the wind. As her mainyard was braced aback, as soon as her other sails shook in the wind the Chesapeake gathered sternboard, and came down upon the Shannon with her port quarter opposite the latter's main chains. Whilst the Chesapeake was making this crippled and helpless movement, the Shannon's second broadside was delivered from a practically raking position, and the Chesapeake's second broadside effected little damage, as many of the guns could not be brought to bear. This second broadside of the Shannon broke in the stern and quarter ports, and swept the men from the after guns on the quarter deck. No less than forty shot entered the Chesapeake's stern ports, and each of these practically raked her deck as far forward as the mainmast. At this time the Shannon's 12-pdr. carronades were trained fore and aft, loaded with grape and musket balls, and fired as rapidly as possible.

The Chesapeake had from the first attached great importance to the small-arm fire from her marines and tops. It was now that the Shannon made good use of this weapon. By Broke's orders, the marines in the gangways and the seamen in her boom boats poured in a withering fire upon the men still standing on the Chesapeake's upper deck. This fire cleared the quarter deck of all but a dozen

men. The sternway of the Chesapeake drove her rapidly into the Shannon, and she finally struck the latter just forward of her main chains. It was not Broke's intention to board when he saw the Chesapeake driving down upon him. His own helm was put up, in a vain effort to keep away; but his jib-stay was shot away, and, being blanketed by the Chesapeake, he was powerless to avert the collision.

It was just six o'clock when the contact took place, and the explosion of an arm-chest on the quarter deck of the Chesapeake the instant before had thrown a flame as high as her tops, and completed the confusion on her quarter deck. As the Chesapeake was a flush-decked ship, all this was plainly visible to Broke, who, seeing that the enemy were flinching, ordered the ships lashed, the great-gun firing to cease, and the boarders called. The regular call for boarders was not sounded on board the Shannon, but the verbal call had sufficed to gather a sufficient number.

As the ships locked, Captain Lawrence, already faint from loss of blood, and leaning upon one of the quarter-deck carronades, gave the order for the boarders to be called. But the negro bugler was paralyzed by fear, and hid himself under the boats forward of the main hatch. Verbal orders had just been issued, "Boarders on deck," when Lawrence fell, mortally wounded by a shot in the abdomen. He was carried below exclaiming, "Don't give up the ship," words which have since become historic in the American navy. Ludlow, the first lieutenant, had been carried below before this, mortally wounded. At this time, therefore, there had been either killed or desperately wounded on the spar deck of the Chesapeake, the captain, the first lieutenant, the fourth lieutenant, the sailing-master, the lieutenant of marines, two midshipmen, and the boatswain. Man after man

had been killed at the wheel, and there was on the spar deck no officer of higher rank than a corporal of marines.

The veteran boatswain of the Shannon had lashed the two ships together, and in so doing had had his left arm hewed off by a cutlass blow, and been mortally wounded by musketry fire from the Chesapeake's tops. This lashing lasted only a moment or two, and then parted as the Chesapeake's bow paid off, swinging her across the Shannon's hawse. But short as was this interval, it sufficed for the Shannon to pour her boarders on the enemy's deck.

At two minutes past six Captain Broke, seeing the condition of his adversary, threw down his trumpet, drew his sword, and shouting, "Follow me who can," stepped from the Shannon's gangway upon the muzzle of the after carronade of the Chesapeake, and thence over the rail, followed by some twenty men. As he dropped upon the Chesapeake's quarter deck, not an unwounded American officer or man was there to oppose him. The spar deck divisions were without officers or leaders, and the men had deserted the after part of the ship to escape the frightful storm of grape and shot hurtling through the stern ports. This was the decisive moment of the contest, and the master mind to lead and direct was wanting. Practically the only resistance abaft the mainmast was offered by the chaplain, Mr. Livermore, who advanced towards Broke and fired his pistol at him. In return his arm was nearly severed by a stroke from Broke's broad Toledo blade. Some thirty Americans were gathered in the gangways, but with the exception of the resistance offered by the nine marines, all who remained of the forty-five who went into the action, there was no serious fighting at this point. Many of the men slunk down the hatches, and thence to the hold.

At this time the American third lieutenant, Cox, came on deck by the after ladder, followed by a few men, but

was so demoralized by the aspect of affairs that he turned and basely ran below without attempting to rally his men. The second and fourth divisions of the Shannon's boarders now came clambering on board, by the way of the fore chains and main gangway, and strongly reinforced the men already engaged. Even with this increase, the number of the Shannons on board did not exceed sixty men. Before more could come the two ships fell apart, and there was no further communication until the action was finished.

The British, thus reinforced, made a vigorous charge forward along the gangways, driving the few men there before them. The fire from the Chesapeake's tops, which had been particularly galling and destructive, was still maintained, and it was only by vigorous attacks from the Shannon's tops that these sharpshooters were silenced. One of the Shannon's long 9's was used against the mizzen-top, clearing it at one discharge.

The news that the British were on board was slow in reaching the American officers on the gun deck. We have seen the fate of the boarders of the second division under Cox. Ludlow, already desperately wounded, gathered a few men and made an attempt to come up the main hatch. This attempt was frustrated by the British marines, and Ludlow was thrown below totally disabled by a sabre stroke.

Lieutenant Budd, who commanded the forward gun deck division, but now receiving word, through one of the Captain's aids, that the enemy had boarded, called upon his division to follow him, and rushed up the forecandle ladder. But the recruits and novices, demoralized by the bloodshed and confused by the disorder, held back, and scarcely a dozen veterans came on deck with him. When Budd reached the spar deck he gave orders to board the fore tack, in order to swing clear of the Shannon, and

then bravely attacked the British as they came charging forward. So determined was this rally that the British actually gave way for a moment, and the rush of Budd and his men took them aft to the main hatch. An instant later the British rallied in overwhelming numbers, and the handful of Americans were cut down and dispersed. Budd himself was wounded and thrown down the main hatch.

The Americans who followed Budd on deck were imperfectly armed, as most of the boarders' arms were kept on the quarter deck or about the main and mizzen masts. The British had seized on the loaded muskets aft, and made good use of them against their adversaries. Commander Raymond, who was one of the fourth division of boarders, states that the Americans did not attempt to come up. "We only met a few," he adds. This was undoubtedly the truth. Disheartened by their losses, demoralized by the cries of the wounded, confused by the disorder caused by the havoc of battle, undisciplined, without confidence in themselves, the mass of the men on the gun deck, some one hundred and fifty in number, either remained passive, or slunk below.

After Budd had been driven below, the British pushed forward to the forecastle, and all resistance was at an end. Broke speaks of the Americans as "fighting desperately, but disorderly," and it is evident that there was much individual bravery but no concerted action. Broke received a severe cutlass stroke as he led his men in the last charge to the forecastle. This wound laid open the skull, and exposed the brain, nearly costing him his life.

Commander Raymond states that the Americans fought well. "Their hearts were not in it," are his words, and that at the critical moment they "had no means to resist." I take his meaning to be, that without leaders or organization they fought in a desultory, aimless way, and

that many of those who came on deck were very imperfectly armed.

The Americans on the spar deck were either dead or prisoners, those on the gun deck completely disorganized, a cowering mass, hopeless and helpless. The officers were dead or wounded, and the contest was over. Within less than five minutes from the time that Broke stepped over the Chesapeake's rail, all resistance had ended. The suddenness of the result startled the British themselves; and so little had it been anticipated on board the Shannon that when her first lieutenant, Mr. Watt, went aft to hoist a white flag over the American ensign, which the British had hauled down, the Shannon opened fire with one of her after guns, thinking that the Americans had regained possession of their ship. This unfortunate error resulted in the death of Lieutenant Watt and four men belonging to the Shannon.

With the capture of the spar deck the victors rested, not intending to do more until reinforcements reached them from the Shannon. But a shot having been fired up the main hatch, killing an English marine, the gratings were lifted and a fire was poured into the gun deck. Captain Broke, who was resting on a gun carriage in a semi-conscious condition, heard this firing, and upon learning the cause ordered the gun deck cleared and the prisoners driven into the hold. This was done with cold steel and in no very gentle fashion.

The entire duration of the action was fifteen minutes, the great guns being actively used for six minutes of this time. The American coast, from Eastern Point to Marblehead, was lined with observers, and many score had put out in small boats to witness the action. The testimony of these eye-witnesses, as recorded in letters and journals, states that the spectators could not believe that the end had actually come. The battle was literally yard-

arm to yard-arm, and the losses on both sides were appalling. Neither ship had suffered greatly in her gear aloft, though both mizzen-masts were badly wounded, and the stays and rigging so cut up that the topmasts of the Shannon would have gone by the board had there been any sea. But the ocean was as smooth as a mill-pond and the breeze had fallen light. The action had been fought with the ships about forty feet apart, until the Chesapeake fouled. Then for a time it was found necessary to use rope rammers on board the Shannon, as the ordinary wooden ones took against the Chesapeake's sides. The hand grenade which exploded the arm-chest on the Chesapeake's quarter deck was thrown from the Shannon's gangway.

The Shannon received from shot about one-half the damage she inflicted on her adversary. It appears from the records that the Chesapeake was struck by

	25 32-pdr. shot
	29 18 " "
	2 9 " "
	306 grape "
Total	<hr/> 362

The Shannon by

	13 32-pdr. shot
	12 18 " "
	14 bar "
	119 grape "
Total	<hr/> 158

Four of the Chesapeake's guns were dismounted in the action, two of them being on the gun deck. The general firing lasted less than ten minutes, and eighty per cent of the Shannon's shot struck her opponent. It is quite impossible to give any percentage of the hits of the Chesapeake. The figures show that the Shannon was struck by twenty-eight shot of all kinds per minute, and



the Chesapeake by sixty. Of heavy shot the Shannon was struck by four per minute, and the Chesapeake by nine. It is evident from the rapidity of the Shannon's fire and proportion of hits that any frigate opposing her must either have captured her, or have been herself captured, in less than a half-hour.

In the account just given, the feature of boarding has been detailed at great length. This is due to the dramatic incidents of the hand-to-hand contest waged on the Chesapeake's deck, more than to the relative value of this fighting, considered by itself. The one salient point upon whose issue victory depended was the destruction wrought by the Shannon's great-gun fire. This drove the crew from her enemy's spar-deck guns, utterly demoralizing those whom the shot spared, and had not the boarding occurred, the Chesapeake must soon have succumbed to the injuries thus inflicted upon the personnel. The Constitution and United States inflicted far more serious material damage upon the British frigates opposed to them, and the Chesapeake battered the Shannon's hull far worse than the Guerriere, Java, and Macedonian did the hulls of the American frigates. These facts serve to show that the Chesapeake, unprepared as she was, could have more than held her own against the average British frigate, and that the Shannon, though decidedly superior to other frigates in her service, was not better fought than the American frigates named.

The Shannon and the Chesapeake engaged at a distance varying from fifty yards to forty feet; and yet at these short ranges, though a frigate's lofty sides and towering spars virtually fill the horizon in the quarter where she lies, a considerable percentage of the Shannon's shot failed to leave any trace of themselves alow or aloft. Some of the heaviest of the shot struck in the hull planking, unable to penetrate. This was probably caused by

the vicious practice of double-shotting. Neither ship was hulled so badly as to cause serious anxiety as to leaks, and neither ship was crippled to a dangerous extent.

As to the casualties:

The Shannon lost : killed, 23 ; wounded, 56 ; total, 79.

The Chesapeake lost : killed, 61 ; wounded, 87 ; total, 148.

Grand total : killed, 84 ; wounded, 143 ; total, 227.

Commander Raymond makes the Chesapeake's total loss two hundred and eighty-four, but his estimate is not borne out by official data. Three hundred and twenty-five American prisoners were landed at Halifax ; and this number, added to the sixty-one killed, gives a total of three hundred and eighty-six, within one of the number on board the Chesapeake.

The proportional losses were :

Shannon : killed, 7% ; wounded, 17% ; total, 24%.

Chesapeake : killed, 16% ; wounded, 30% ; total, 46%.

Raymond's figures would make this :

Shannon : killed, 7.6% ; wounded, 17% ; total, 24.6%.

Chesapeake : killed, 21.7% ; wounded, 51.7% ; total, 73.4%.

These figures are the plain exponents of how the battle was won. The American losses in opposing the boarders were relatively slight, as compared with her losses by great-gun fire, whilst the Shannon's percentage, especially in killed, was materially increased from this cause. The total of the losses of the two ships was thus about 230 men, whilst the total at the battle off St. Vincent, where fleets were engaged, was but 296, and at Navarino only 272.

Before Broke led his boarders over the Chesapeake's side the latter's superiority in numbers had more than vanished. The awful slaughter on the Chesapeake's spar deck had decided the fate of the contest ; and even if the

two ships had not fouled, the result could not long have remained in doubt. The American was beaten at great guns, and would have been forced to strike in a short time, had no boarding taken place.

Lawrence wilfully threw away a great tactical advantage at the very outset. The Shannon was close hauled, and had little way on. The Chesapeake swept down, running free, and it was entirely in her power to put up her helm, and bear up across the Shannon's stern. This would have enabled her to deliver a raking broadside that should have crippled the Shannon. After this she could have ported her helm, and have engaged with her starboard, or weather broadside. Apart from this advantage neglected, Lawrence committed a serious error in attempting to luff to deaden his way. In lieu of this, when he found that he was over-reaching his adversary, Lawrence should have put his helm up, and thus have forced the Shannon either to do the same, or to run the risk of being raked from forward. There is some reason to believe that, had the Chesapeake had a seasoned crew, Broke and his men would have been swept overboard when they first ventured on her deck. But these are now idle conjectures. The battle was gallantly fought and to the victors belong the honors.

The Chesapeake had suffered far greater losses than the Shannon when the boarding occurred, and these losses disheartened and terrified her untrained men. Her few veterans kept their wits and their pluck, but the novices lost both. Had Lawrence commanded the Chesapeake as many months as Broke had commanded his ship years, he would have had his crew well in hand, and the men, accustomed to discipline, would not have been cowed by any disaster.

The result of the battle was the logical sequence of the training of the respective crews. Neither chance nor the

fortune of war was responsible for the capture. Lawrence and Broke were probably equal in all the qualities that go to constitute excellent commanders. The advantage in ships and the superiority in numbers were both on the side of the Americans. The natural bravery of the two crews, as shown by the desperate fighting, was fairly equal. The fact remains that the Shannon was better fought, better drilled, and much more efficiently organized than her adversary. Her great-gun fighting was greatly superior, and her discipline so perfect that even with her commander and sixty of her men on board the Chesapeake (and, as the Shannons supposed for the moment, defeated) the officers and men at once renewed the contest with hearts undaunted, and only desisted when hailed by their own officers already on board the Chesapeake with the tidings, "We have possession."

At ten o'clock that night, temporary repairs having been made to the hulls and wounded spars, both ships made sail and stood off the land. Five days later both the victorious Shannon and the captured Chesapeake entered the harbor of Halifax.

In England Broke's achievement was hailed with acclamations. The previous galling defeats of British frigates were avenged. And better even than this glory was the assurance that a certain way of overcoming the pestilent Yankee had at last been discovered. It will amaze one who follows carefully the causes which culminated in the Shannon's victory, to learn that victors and vanquished both ascribed the result to the efficacy of boarding. This fallacy subsequently led the British to sacrifice many men in their endeavors to end contests with cold steel. I need scarcely add that boarding an enemy who has not been already whipped nor demoralized is sure to end in disaster. And the case of the Chesapeake does not traverse the rule.

The Chesapeake was fought gallantly, but it is well to acknowledge that she was not handled skillfully. Yard-arm to yard-arm contests are decided upon the powers of endurance of the men engaged, and this endurance is evolved by discipline. Knowing that his crew was deficient in steadiness, Lawrence courted disaster by accepting battle at close quarters when it was open to him to fight at long range.

Apart from the obvious deductions already emphasized, no great fact stands forth as an object lesson of this bloody battle, and the loss of the Chesapeake affords nothing conclusive as to the relative merits of the nationalities engaged.

The men of Old England and the men of New England fought, as their Anglo-Saxon ancestors fought, resolutely and even desperately. The steadfast courage which rises to its height as the tide of battle surges about it is natural bravery, trained and educated by experience. In the ship of Old England, Broke had cultivated this trait to a high degree. In the ship of New England, Lawrence was forced to rely upon this untrained natural bravery of the crew. The result was inevitable. England justly exulted over her victory, and at this day we Americans can say with her that it was gallantly won and gallantly contested. The experience bought at so woful a cost has taught us that skill and gallantry must be allied to training and discipline to ensure success.

## APPENDIX.

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# PERRY'S VICTORY ON LAKE ERIE.

BY

COMMANDER J. GILES EATON, U.S.N.

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*Read February 2, 1897.*

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## PERRY'S VICTORY ON LAKE ERIE.

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THE influence of sea power on history is a theme pertaining rather to the statesman and historian than to the technical officer, whose main delight in studies of engagements is found in knowing how fields and fights were won. The immediate results are of the first importance to his mind, and, though neither blind nor indifferent to the importance of consequences, his aim is always to achieve the first, and trust to natural issues for the second.

In the profound discussion of the subject the general public may confound the objects which it is sought to attain with the particular steps which it is necessary to take *en route*.

It may well be doubted whether naval commanders four score years ago probed more deeply into the whys and wherefores than was essential to the accomplishment of the destruction of the enemy before them; and we may go even farther than this, and gravely question whether the future commander will fight as efficiently if he allows his imagination to view too vast a field, and so lose sight of the task at hand.

The victory of Perry, on Lake Erie, carried in its train wide consequences of territorial acquisition. I am hazarding little in asserting that, had Barclay been victorious, the whole northern boundary of the United States would have been forced southward from the great waterway of the Lakes. It is indeed probable that this dire contingency had been debated in Washington, and that the initial step in defense, the sending of Chauncey to Lake

Ontario, was the result of a matured plan to defend the lake coasts by water. Possibly before the surrender of General Hull it had been considered that Lake Erie was sufficiently guarded by the land forces; but, from the date of his capitulation, the British forces gathering at Detroit and Malden were preparing for an invasion in force, using the Lake as a basis of supplies. Urged by the imminence of the danger the Government resolved to create a squadron on Lake Erie, and enter vigorously upon a contest for the supremacy of its shallow waters.

The blockade of the Atlantic seacoast, and the utter inadequacy of the gunboats even to annoy the British cruisers, left free for the fresh-water service trained officers and well-drilled men; and it was wholly due to this disciplined nucleus that fleets were successfully created and fought whilst the forest sap still seeped from keels, carlins, and plank shears.

Oliver Hazard Perry, a lieutenant in the navy, of thirteen years' naval service (being in 1813 twenty-seven years of age), had first seen fighting in the West Indies, and later in that excellent school off Tripoli. Placed in command of a flotilla of gunboats at Newport, R.I., his active spirit chafed at the enforced inaction; and soon after Chauncey had gone to Lake Ontario with eight hundred and fifty sailors and marines Perry asked to be transferred to service on the Lakes. To his great delight the request was granted; and on February 17th he received orders to select such officers and men as were fitted for the service on the Lakes, and to report with them to Commodore (then Captain) Chauncey at Sackett's Harbor on Lake Ontario. The very day this order was received Perry dispatched a detachment of fifty men under an officer, and two days later a second party of the same number, and again on the 21st a third party of the same number, on the long and arduous journey through

almost untracked forests, in the dead of the northern winter. Perry himself started on Washington's birthday, and despite forced marches did not reach Sackett's Harbor until the eighth of March, and, being detained there by a threatened assault of the British, did not reach Erie, then called Presque Isle, till the end of March. Here he found that the two brigs, Lawrence and Niagara, were already in course of construction, also three other vessels of lesser tonnage and lighter build. So hurried were the shipwrights that many a tree which waved its branches in the sunrise breeze found itself chopped, hewn, squared, and tree-nailed into the ship's hull before the evening sun had set over the lake. Despite this rapid construction, all the vessels appear to have been well built, and certainly accomplished the object for which they were designed.

As Erie was subject to attack, and the British vessels had complete control of the Lake, the shipwrights were drilled for defense, and the complements intended for the improvised fleet constituted a permanent garrison.

Stores, especially naval stores, were sadly lacking, and Perry himself journeyed to Pittsburgh to hasten their delivery. By hard work and good fortune Perry succeeded in bringing to Erie the brig Caledonia and the schooners Tigress and Somers, which had been blockaded below Buffalo by Canadian batteries. There were built from the stump the brig Lawrence of twenty guns; the Niagara, brig, of twenty guns; the Ariel, schooner, of four guns; the Scorpion, schooner, of two guns; and the Porcupine, schooner, of one gun. These vessels were constructed from the forests adjacent; but all the appurtenances, batteries, sails and rigging, had to be brought hundreds of miles over mere trails in the almost virgin forests. The canvas and cordage came from Philadelphia, whilst the guns and projectiles were cast at Pittsburgh, already the seat of a growing iron industry.

It were idle to dwell upon the almost endless embarrassments attending the creation of a fleet under such disadvantageous conditions. The wonder is that it was equipped at all; and that it was so well outfitted attests the executive ability of Perry.

Early in July, the squadron, consisting of the brigs Lawrence, Niagara, and Caledonia, the schooners Ariel, Scorpion, Porcupine, Somers, and Tigress, and the sloop Trippe, was ready for sea, but almost destitute of men; and despite urgent dispatches it was not until August that Captain Chauncey, on Lake Ontario, forwarded a detachment under Master Commandant Jesse D. Elliott, which enabled Perry to fill his complement to a point of fighting efficiency. Dragging the heavier craft across the shallow bar of Erie harbor, the American squadron of ten ships put to sea on August 12, and proceeded up the Lake towards Sandusky. At this point Perry communicated with General Harrison, and arranged for concerted action between the land and water forces. It must be recalled in this connection that General Hull's surrender to Brock at Detroit had thrown the northern shore of the Lake under control of the British forces, and Proctor, with Tecumseh, was at Malden, ready with five thousand men to cross the frontier and devastate the Lake shores of Ohio, Pennsylvania, and New York. After looking into Malden, and deliberating upon a boat attack, which was fortunately abandoned, Perry withdrew to Put-in-Bay, where we find him on September 9th, 1813, holding another council of war, and deciding, unless the enemy could be brought to battle in open water, to attack him with boats at the anchorage at Malden.

At sunrise on September 10th the British fleet was descried by the mast-head lookout on the Lawrence, and the signal to unmoor and chase was at once made.

At this time Master Commandant Perry's squadron con-

sisted of the brig *Lawrence* (flagship), Lieutenant J. John Yarnall, mounting two long 12-pounders and eighteen short 32-pounders; the brig *Niagara*, Master Commandant Jesse D. Elliott, two long 12-pounders, and eighteen short 32-pounders; the brig *Caledonia*, Lieutenant Daniel Turner, two long 24-pounders and one short 32-pounder; the schooner *Ariel*, Lieutenant John H. Packett, four long 12-pounders; the schooner *Tigress*, Lieutenant Augustus H. M. Conckling, one long 32-pounder; the sloop *Trippe*, Lieutenant Thomas Holdup Stevens, one long 32-pounder; the schooner *Porcupine*, Midshipman George Senate, one long 32-pounder; the schooner *Scorpion*, Sailing-Master Stephen Champlin, one long 32-pounder and one short 24-pounder; the schooner *Somers*, Sailing-Master Thomas C. Almy, one long 24-pounder and one short 32-pounder; in all, nine vessels, mounting 54 guns, with 1536 pounds of metal; and, deducting seven per cent for deficient weight in American metal, we have 1428 pounds. These vessels were manned by 490 men, only 125 of whom were from the regular navy; a fourth of them were raw recruits, and a fourth were negroes; 116 were unfit for duty during the action, as they were suffering from cholera morbus and lake fever. Of the 137 men and boys of the *Lawrence's* crew, only 103 were on board fit for duty on this occasion.

The British squadron consisted of the ship *Detroit* (flagship), mounting two long 24-pounders, one long 18-pounder, six long 12-pounders, eight long 9-pounders, one short 24-pounder and one short 18-pounder; the ship *Queen Charlotte*, Captain Finnis, one long 12-pounder, two long 9-pounders, and fourteen short 24-pounders; the schooner *Lady Prevost*, Lieutenant Edward Wise Buchan, one long 9-pounder, two long 6-pounders, and ten short 12-pounders; the brig *Hunter*, Lieutenant Bignell, four long 6-pounders, two long 4-pounders, two long 2-pounders, and

two short 12-pounders ; the sloop *Little Belt*, one long 12-pounder and two long 6-pounders ; the schooner *Chippewa*, Mr. Campbell, one long 9-pounder ; in all, six vessels, mounting 63 guns, with a total weight of metal 852 pounds. These vessels were manned by from 440 to 490 men and boys. James has neglected to give satisfactory evidence of the number of men in the English squadron, and as the British official reports are silent on this important detail we must rely on American official documents. 150 of these men were from the Royal Navy, 80 were Canadian sailors, and 240 of them were soldiers, mostly regulars. Commander Robert Heriot Barclay, the Commander of the British squadron, was "a man of no ordinary fame." At this time he was in his thirty-seventh year, and had fought under Nelson at Trafalgar, where he was dangerously wounded, and in still another engagement he had lost an arm. Lieutenant Buchan, of the *Lady Prevost*, also had distinguished himself under Nelson.

#### COMPARATIVE FORCE.

American	54 guns	1428 pounds	490 crew.
British	63 guns	852 pounds	440 to 490 crew.

Of the men listed the Americans had fit for duty 416, and the British probably a few less, but I do not regard this as at all an essential point in the battle fought. Provided each side had a sufficient number to fight their guns, the mere presence of more men could add little to the efficiency of the ships. But when we consider the weight of the broadsides we find that the Americans had a decided superiority. Thus, the broadsides of the nine American vessels weighed 896 pounds, whilst the weight of broadside of the six British vessels was but 459 pounds. The superiority of the Americans in long-range guns was as 300 to 200. In tonnage the Americans were superior

also, only one vessel, the Detroit, equalling the Lawrence and Niagara in displacement, although the Queen Charlotte, of 400 tons, was practically in the same class. Had all the vessels of Perry's fleet engaged at the same time the issue could not long have been in doubt; for the American vessels had all the elements of superiority, and, as we shall presently see, the capricious wind declared itself an ally, and by a sudden shift gave Perry the weather-gage.

Before this occurred the American fleet had been beating to windward, and the only fear which possessed their minds was that the enemy might fill away to the eastward and stand down the Lake. A sudden shift of the wind to the eastward would have precluded this manœuvre, if it had been contemplated, and Perry, with his vessels in order of battle, was left with the weather-gage. At 11.45 A.M., Perry hoisted the signal for "close action," half distance (that is, 360 feet), line ahead. Commanders had previously been cautioned to preserve the line; but Perry had further added, in the words of Nelson, "If you lay your enemy close alongside you cannot be out of your place." The importance of remembering this maxim will be evident when we see how a too strict observance of the letter and utter disregard of the spirit of the signal nearly caused the loss of the battle.

It will be noted that the American fleet was bearing down on the enemy with a free wind, whilst Barclay, with his light sails handed and topsails shivering, calmly awaited their approach. Perry, hoisting his long motto flag inscribed with the words of the dying Lawrence — "Don't give up the ship" — crowded ahead on his leading vessels in the light and rather baffling airs, whilst the brig Caledonia, the next in line, a slow sailer in any breeze but actually sluggish in light airs, fell farther and farther to the rear and out of station. Elliott, in the Niagara, the

next in order, shortened sail, and finally luffed far to windward, to avoid over-running his immediate leader. The British fleet, in compact order, each vessel in supporting distance, covered less than one-third of the space of the American fleet. A delay of ten minutes would have enabled Perry to correct this break in his formation, and bring his rear vessels into close order. But, animated by the fear that the foe might still endeavor to escape, he crowded forward; and at 11.50 the action was begun by the Detroit, which discharged her long 24-pounder, whose shot crashed into the Lawrence amidships. The Scorpion, which was the nearest of the American fleet, responded, and at 11.55 the Lawrence herself opened fire with her long-range guns. At 12, the Lawrence essayed her carronades, but finding that these fell short soon ceased their fire. At the same time the action became general, although all the rear ships of the American fleet were practically out of range, and only the long guns of the Caledonia and Niagara were fired. As the long-range guns of the Detroit, Hunter, and Queen Charlotte were centered on the Lawrence she soon began to suffer seriously, and in order to bring his carronades into play Perry made sail to close. By 12.20 he had worked down to close quarters, and the action was being furiously waged between the Lawrence on one side, and the Detroit, Hunter, and Queen Charlotte on the other. The relative weight of broadsides between these contestants was: Lawrence, 300 pounds, and the three British vessels, 400 pounds. The Scorpion and Ariel were actively engaged, but could not divert the fierce fire poured on the American flagship. The Caledonia had gradually closed, but the Niagara was far to windward, and practically out of action. As the Niagara was the best manned and most efficient of the American vessels, her discreditable inaction at this period gave the British a preponderance in action which was soon to silence the



Lawrence and well nigh defeat a superior antagonist. The fighting at the head of the line was then extraordinarily fierce and bloody. The four leading British vessels and the three leading American ships were fought in the most determined and courageous manner. With the schooners assisting, the weight of metal was about equal, but the leading British vessels had a superiority in men. The smaller vessels were suffering but little, as nearly all the guns on both sides were aimed at the larger craft. Thus, although the Lawrence was almost a wreck, the Queen Charlotte was nearly disabled, and the Detroit was fearfully cut up. But in losses of men the Lawrence had suffered most of all. At this time, 12.25, of the 103 men who had gone into action on board the Lawrence, 83 were actually dead or wounded, and her shallow cock-pit, situated above the water line, permitting the round shot to pass through, afforded no shelter to the wounded, and men upon the operating table were cut in two by the shot of the enemy. The scene in the cock-pit at this time must have been horrible. Crowded with wounded, suffering from every form of laceration, the deck a mass of gore, with fragments of flesh scattered in all directions, the wounded receiving new and mortal strokes from the round shot passing through, the shock of the constant striking of the broadsides on the battered hull, the fall of spars, the splintering of the boats at the davits, were all heard through the opened seams of the deck above, adown which streamed rivulets of blood on the heads of those below.

On deck every brace and bowline had been shot away, the bulwarks were shattered to pieces, and every gun but one in the engaged or starboard side was disabled or dismounted. Several times the Lawrence had barely escaped blowing up, owing to shot piercing her magazine.

As the crew on deck fell, Perry frequently called through the skylight to the surgeon's assistants for aid in

working the battery. Perry himself fired the Lawrence's last gun, aided by the chaplain and purser, God and Mammomon serving his purpose together.

Throughout all this most critical period Perry's calm courage never deserted him; and though his ship was a wreck, his crew was a mass of dead and crippled humanity, his rigging and sails were torn and shot to ribbons, one mast was gone and the other wounded, the thought of striking never appears to have occurred to him. An officer of infinite resource, the flagship having served her purpose, he resolved at once to transfer his flag to the still uninjured Niagara, and wrest a victory from the very jaws of defeat. One boat, on the port quarter of the Lawrence, would still float, and this was manned by four of the crew who could still pull an oar; and taking with him the huge motto flag, some fifty-seven feet long, Perry stepped from the gory deck into the cutter alongside, and pulling clear of the quarter steered his course direct for the Niagara. Standing erect in the stern sheets he was at once made the target for the British gunners, and we have their own testimony that whole broadsides of grape and canister were sent point blank at this tiny craft. Oars were struck, gunwales torn, and even the colors at the stern pierced, but Perry passed uninjured on his way, though forced by his crew to sit down and not expose himself to needless peril.

By 2.45 he had gained the deck of the Niagara, and sending her commander, Master-Commandant Elliott, to hasten up the rear vessels, Perry hoisted again his own flag and his long motto of "Don't give up the ship," and putting the helm up and making sail in the now freshening breeze was soon rapidly bearing down on the English flagship.

The Lawrence, crippled beyond help, with every gun dismounted, with only fourteen unhurt in her complement,

slowly drifted through the British line, and finally, all further resistance being impossible, she hauled down her colors, and a mere wreck outwardly, a charnel house inwardly, was swept to leeward, as the enemy could not take possession.

As the *Lawrence* hauled down her colors, the British hailed her surrender with cheers, and supposed the battle won. We may imagine the feelings which burned in Perry's breast as he heard these shouts, and saw his late flagship blown helplessly away. As the *Lawrence* finally got out of range and no enemy had boarded her, the colors were again hoisted, though she took no further part in the closing act of the battle.

Scarcely had the last British cheer died away, when the rapid approach of the *Niagara*, followed by the *Somers*, *Porcupine*, *Tigress*, and *Trippe* warned them that victory still hung in the balance, and that they must be prepared for the new attack. In order to bring a fresh broadside to bear, the *Detroit* attempted to wear, but in so doing was fouled by the *Queen Charlotte*, and both vessels were locked together, head and stern. In this position, Perry, in the *Niagara*, with the signal for close action flying, swept ahead of the *Queen Charlotte* and astern of the *Detroit*, and at pistol range raked both ships with his starboard guns, whilst as he swept around, his port broadside raked the *Lady Prevost*. Then, backing his topsails, he engaged the *Hunter*. The effect of these raking broadsides, delivered at short range on the already crippled British ship, was absolutely decisive. The storm of grape, canister, and solid shot tore its way through the crowded decks and cut great lines through the living. The helpless position of the *Detroit* and *Queen Charlotte*, the constant raking fire of the American schooners which had now come into action, the carrying away of all the masts of the *Detroit* and the mizzenmast of the *Queen Charlotte* wrought irre-

trievable ruin. For the first time in the action the whole American force was engaged, and from this moment the battle was won. At 3 P.M., or just fifteen minutes from the time that the Niagara bore up to come into action, the Hunter, Lady Prevost, Detroit, and Queen Charlotte surrendered. The Chippewa and the Little Belt, after a vain effort to escape, were captured by the Scorpion and the Ariel. Determined to receive the surrender of the British on the quarter-deck of his own flagship, scarred and torn, but worthy of all honor, Perry again took to his boat, and repairing on board the Lawrence received the swords of the Commanders, at once returning them in token of his appreciation of their gallant resistance.

The American loss was 27 killed and 96 wounded, — a total of 123. Of these 22 killed and 61 wounded had fallen on the Lawrence, or practically two-thirds of the whole casualties on the American side. The British loss, falling most heavily on the Detroit and Queen Charlotte, was 41 killed and 94 wounded, — a total of 135. Over half of these casualties took place in the last fifteen minutes of the engagement. The very large proportion of casualties on both sides attests the severity of the fighting, and courage of the contestants.

Both fleets fought bravely till the end came; and if the Americans have rejoiced somewhat unduly over this famous victory, let us recall that it affords the only instance in history of the surrender and capture of an entire British fleet.

The consequences of the loss of the British fleet were immediate and decisive. It gave to the Americans the complete command of the upper lakes, insured the conquest of Upper Canada, and increased the confidence in American resources.

The enemy at once evacuated Detroit and Michigan, and shortly after Malden was occupied by American

troops. In short, the territory lost by the land forces in 1812 was recaptured by the naval forces in 1813, as the result of this battle.

It is an ungracious task to criticise a victor, but, if we are to profit by a study of his methods, it is necessary and useful. The chief fact which stands boldly in relief in the victory won by Perry is the creation and formation of a fleet with resources ludicrously inadequate. In this young Perry showed not only great ability, but his possession, in a wonderful degree, of the zeal and perseverance, which, looking steadfastly to an end in view, overcomes every obstacle, and conquers by sheer persistence. The operation of getting his fleet across the shallow bar of Lake Erie was a brilliant achievement, executed in the presence of a powerful foe. The manner in which the American ships were fought shows clearly that the crews, composed of motley material, — part sailors, part soldiers, part backwoodsmen, now for the first time actually afloat, — were well drilled in great guns; and, apart from the gross error of the Captain of the Niagara, the vessels were well sailed and efficiently manœuvered. The energy and activity of Perry had infused confidence throughout the men under him, and the desperate fight made by the Lawrence proves conclusively that the calm courage of the Commander-in-Chief influenced the whole crew. Again, Perry's abandonment of his flagship, and rowing in an open boat to the still uninjured vessels of his squadron, gave clear intimation of the indomitable pluck and resourceful activity which characterized his actions. I can find but three other instances in history in which the flag officer shifted his colors during action, to wit: the Duke of York, at the battle of Solebay; the English Admiral Sprague in the battle of the Texel, fought in 1673; and Von Tromp, when he shifted from the Golden Lion to the Comet. Perry was nearer his enemy than any of

the three mentioned, and probably at no time during the action was he in such deadly peril as when, erect in the stern sheets of his small cutter, he crossed the broadsides of his foes and ran the gauntlet of their small-arm fire.

But neither at this time nor at any period of the battle did his calmness desert him. Bearing a seemingly charmed life, he passed through all the vicissitudes of the action as unmoved as though on parade.

Nevertheless, granting all that has been thus briefly outlined, — granting his unquestioned courage, his officer-like bearing, his coolness under the most trying condition, and his readiness to change his plan of action when circumstances changed, and to all these admirable qualities, adding the credit for the creation of his fleet and the organization which reflected high honor upon the flag-officer, — nevertheless, it remains to be said that Perry's fleet, as a fleet, was poorly handled in the action, and no proper use was made of its material resources until the last fifteen minutes of an action which lasted a full three hours.

I have no intention of entering upon the once hotly contested dispute as to the blameworthiness of Master-Commandant Elliott, of the Niagara. A mere glance at the diagrams will show what his ship should have done, and did not do. Yet, granting this, it is fully evident that Perry pressed into action with his fleet not at half distance, and that, with the weather-gage and an absolute command of the situation, he began the contest when he knew that at most four of his nine ships could properly engage. None knew better than Perry that the Caledonia was a slow sailer, and none knew better than he that she was falling far astern and holding back the major part of his fleet, when he fired his first gun. Although at this time the breeze was light, a very short delay would have sufficed him to get all his vessels in hand and concentrate

his fire upon the enemy. In despite of this, his eagerness for battle led him into a tactical blunder in separating his fleet into two squadrons, and engaging with the weakest portion of his command. This error cost many lives on board the *Lawrence*, and for a time jeopardized the success of the action. Perry's failure to concentrate his force is the salient feature which strikes at once at the prime essential of success. However much blame may be visited upon Elliott in the *Niagara*, it cannot be gainsaid that the flag-officer, before committing his own ship to close action, is bound by every rule of prudence to have his fleet well in hand and his ships within supporting distance of each other. Perry's sudden dash for the enemy was ill advised, and cost him dearly. The original plan, that, whilst the *Lawrence* engaged the *Detroit*, the *Niagara* should close with the *Queen Charlotte*, was well devised. But when the *Queen Charlotte*, which had exchanged but a few long-range shots with the *Niagara*, saw that she could assist the *Detroit* and *Hunter* in their conflict with the *Lawrence*, she very wisely drew ahead, and the *Niagara*, not following, was soon entirely out of action. Had Elliott possessed the daring and energy of Perry all would have been well, and it must not be forgotten that a great part of the success won by Nelson was due to the daring and skill of his captains, and on this Perry could fairly count.

Again, upon a lake whose surface was as smooth as the traditional mill-pond, the schooners of Perry's fleet could, in the earlier part of the action, have rendered most excellent service. It does appear that Perry's management of those vessels with their long-range guns was faulty, and that, favored by the weather-gage and a preponderance of guns, he should have made these craft important factors in the first attack. The services they rendered in the last fifteen minutes of the action, and the testimony of

the British officers to the destruction caused by their terrible raking fire, show what capabilities they possessed.

Despite these defects in his battle plan, or it may be because of them, Perry's victory was a more brilliant exploit than had he regularly and methodically crushed his foe by bringing all his vessels into action simultaneously. The final result was complete, as Perry well reported, — "We have met the enemy and they are ours, — two ships, one brig, two schooners and one sloop." Independently of the glory to our flag, the battle insured the recapture of Detroit, rout of the British army, the conquest of the whole peninsula of Upper Canada, and the immediate tranquillity of the entire littoral from Huron to Niagara.

The country rejoiced exceedingly in the glory of the achievement, and honors of promotion and laudatory addresses were given the victor.

The wonderful battle picture which hangs on the landing of the Senate wing in the Capitol at Washington depicts Perry erect and dauntless, as he leaves in his small boat the battered wreck of the *Lawrence*. And the guns of his fleet were used to announce, from Buffalo to New York, the opening of the Erie Canal, conveying, by their reverberations, the news, in one hour and twenty minutes, from lake to tide-water.

The glory of his achievement will endure as the only instance of the capture of an entire British fleet, upon any waters, and the complete annihilation of the forces of that great power upon the Upper Lakes.

This glory Perry earned by his work of preparation and his indomitable courage; and as long as our navy exists his name will be honored and his praises sung, as evidences that the American people, and they alone, have successfully withstood the great naval power of the Christian era.



THE LAST EXPLOIT OF OLD IRONSIDES,

OR THE

ACTION BETWEEN THE CONSTITUTION AND THE  
CYANE AND LEVANT.

BY

COMMANDER J. GILES EATON, U.S.N.

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*Read March 3, 1896.*

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## THE LAST EXPLOIT OF OLD IRONSIDES.

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THE record of the Constitution contains many notable events, and of all the men-of-war which have flown the flag of the United States, the Old Ironsides alone retains the renown of her victories in the war of 1812. For fifty years her name was the one most dear to her countrymen, and to this day our pulses quicken as we recall her successes. Apart from the usual vicissitudes common to men-of-war, and even beyond the episodes of successful combats such as have fallen to the lot of very few, this one ship, the Constitution, bears upon her history not alone the single contests whose victorious results cheered the hearts of our ancestors, and carried dismay to the most famous sea-power in history, whose boasts were that her battle-ships were irresistible and her frigates invincible, but also the story of an escape from an overpowering force of the enemy, which constitutes as captivating a tale of real warfare as any romantic sea-yarn conjured by the brilliant imaginations of a Marryat, a Cooper, or a Clark Russell. Beyond these stands forth one action and its sequel which has no exact parallel in naval annals. An action which was not as costly in men and material as many others, but one in which the consummate skill and brilliant seamanship of the commander achieved the full measure of success in the capture of two of the enemy whose combined offensive force was superior to that of the Constitution. The commanders of both of these ships were men of approved courage, excellent seamen, and had under them gallant and thoroughly efficient crews.

In telling again this oft-told tale, I shall vary a little from the accounts found in the standard authors on naval history, as none of them appear to have followed closely the official narrative. It will be the object of this paper to present in as brief and succinct a manner as the subject permits, a lucid narration of as complete a victory as ever was won by superior skill over equal courage.

I disclaim at once any pretence at originality. The familiar waters have been ploughed by literary line-of-battle ships, but the light sloop may perhaps gather a bit of the wreckage her prouder forerunner disdained. The subject matter has been gathered from accepted and well-known authorities, and the main events of the battle will follow closely the accounts of Cooper, Bowen, Emmons, Gaylord, Roosevelt, and Maclay on the American side, and the somewhat divergent in detail, but sensibly concordant accounts, of Allen and James on the English side. I have also been aided slightly by a perusal of some of the original reports at the Navy Department.

The freedom with which all of the authorities above quoted have treated the second of the critical junctures of the contest is surprising, and the apparent disregard shown to the purpose of one of the manœuvres alters completely the exact reason why the Constitution's success was so thorough. On the other hand there has been no hesitation in appropriating from each of the historians any part of their narration which appears best to describe the fight as it occurred. The words are my own, but most of the ideas are due to others.

The frigate Constitution, under the command of Captain Charles Stewart then thirty-seven years of age, after being for a long time blockaded in the harbor of Boston, escaped the vigilance of the blockaders and slipped out to sea on December 17, 1814. As soon as her escape was known to the enemy, the British frigates were ordered to sail in

couples, and their sloops of war to steer clear of every sail which resembled her. Her fame had made her dreaded, and she was, as the first administrator of the Navy reported, "separately superior to any European frigate."

I may here remark that she was built in Boston in 1797, under the law of 1794, which was approved by Washington himself.

I am indebted to the kindness of Commodore Miller for some interesting details of her launching furnished by clippings in an old scrap-book, taken from the "Massachusetts Mercury," printed in Boston in 1797. The President of the United States, John Adams, the Governor, Lieutenant Governor, and all the staff officials, were present at her launching, and thousands from the country round flocked to the scene. Elaborate directions are given to the sight-seers; and people who gathered in boats and skiffs, and on wharves, are cautioned that the "entrance of so large a body may produce an agitation of the water somewhat hazardous."

We also gather that on the Friday preceding the launching "that the cables of the Constitution were carried from Jeffrey & Russell's ropewalk to the Navy Yard, on the shoulders of about 490 men, with music and the American colors."

Music, orations, and salutes of cannon dignified this occasion, and the launch of the ship was heralded as a national achievement. Much is said of the superior proportions and elegance of the ship, and this was not bombast, as her after career proved.

Especial stress was laid on the fact that she was entirely constructed of American materials; and it is curious to note that Congress, nearly a century later, enacted that our new navy should be constructed of domestic steel.

As for her personnel, it is a well known fact that many

of her enlisted men had been captains of their own ships, and her crew comprised probably the finest set of purely American seamen the navy has ever seen. It is unnecessary to allude to her officers. What Stewart was, will be seen by his orders and management at critical epochs, and the prompt handling and excellent tactics at Porto Praya bear ample evidence to the skill of the officers who executed his orders, fought his guns, and directed his men.

The Constitution, after several captures in the Atlantic, was off the Rock of Lisbon in the middle of February, 1815, and by the merest chance failed to fall in with Captain Dacres who had commanded the *Guerrière* when captured by the Constitution. At this time he commanded the frigate *Tiber*, and his own words were "that it would be the happiest moment in his life to be once more opposed to the Constitution." To be ready for such a contingency he had brought the crew of the *Tiber* to a high degree of efficiency by constant drills, and had prepared his ship especially with the object of his wish in view. On February 19th the Constitution and the *Tiber* were both standing down the coast of Portugal, and but a few hours apart. Fate had decreed that they were not to meet, but the following day, February 20th, an event occurred which reflected greater credit on the American frigate than even the capture of the *Tiber*. I speak confidently as to this probable result, as apart from the ill-advised action of the *Chesapeake* with the *Shannon*, when with an undisciplined and absolutely green crew, many of whom had not even been stationed at their quarters, she offered combat to the most efficient frigate in the British navy, the superior marksmanship, and greater readiness of the American vessels had achieved the logical results. And despite James's strictures upon the quality of the Constitution's gunnery at this time, the evidence of the

action gives abundant proof that her gunners had not lost their supremacy.

This same evening, February 19th, Captain Stewart was conversing with some of his officers on the quarter-deck, on their continued ill-luck in failing to meet an enemy of equal force in European waters. In response to a growl from one of the lieutenants, the Captain said, "Before the sun sets again you will be engaged in battle with the enemy, and it will not be with a single ship either." (Gilder.) Stewart was a believer in presentiments, and the complete fulfilment of his prophecy on the morrow must have confirmed him forever as an accurate forecaster.

I shall touch briefly at the end of this paper on the relative forces of the vessels engaged. The actual weight of batteries, and the count of men are elements whose potency it will not do to ignore, on either sea or land. But every sailor knows that two handy ships may easily out-manceuvre a heavy antagonist, and instances abound where English frigates have not only engaged with French battle-ships, but have escaped serious punishment. The raking fire of the *Cyane* could easily cripple a heavier vessel than the *Constitution*; and as we shall see later this effect was repeatedly sought by the lighter ships, and as frequently frustrated.

At one, in the afternoon of February 20th, the *Constitution* being then distant 180 miles from Madeira, which bore West-South-West, the weather misty with occasional dashes of rain, and the wind moderate from the North-East, the mast-head look-out sighted a sail on the lee bow, distant about five miles. The course was altered to converge with that of the stranger, and at two a second sail was sighted to leeward of the first. The nearer sail proved to be the frigate-built corvette *Cyane*, and the more distant, the *Levant*. The Hon. George

Douglass commanded the *Levant* and was the senior officer to Captain Gordon Thomas Falcon of the *Cyane*. Although Stewart knew that a strong force had been despatched against him, and both vessels loomed large in the hazy air, there was no hesitation in at once making sail to close with the strangers. In a marvellously short time the *Constitution* was under all sail to top-gallant studding-sails, and was cutting the seas at eight knots an hour and rapidly overhauling the two sails on her bow. By the time that the more distant ship had come fairly in view, the one first sighted appeared to be a fifty-gun ship, and as she was painted with false ports, the illusion of the mirage was heightened. The first lieutenant, Ballard (who was afterwards captured when prize master of the *Levant*), reported to Captain Stewart that the *Cyane* was a heavy frigate of the line, as fifty-gun ships were frequently designated, and that the more distant one appeared to be a 36-gun frigate. "Be this as it may," said Stewart, "we must flog them when we catch them, whether she has one gun-deck or two." Every endeavor was made to close before the winter's day had left them in darkness. In this there was but partial success, as most of the action was fought by moonlight, the fog having rolled away with the setting sun. Both the British ships were close hauled on the starboard tack, but were separated over five miles from each other. At four the *Levant*, which was leading her consort, bore up to allow the *Cyane* to close.

I believe that Captain Douglass hauled by the wind when he saw the *Constitution* bearing down upon him, as this was his only fighting chance. The *Levant* could not use her stern ports, and, in her crippled condition, could not hope to outsail her swifter adversary. James's remark as to the characteristics of a Douglass in not deserting a consort, is simply nonsense.



At four-thirty the Constitution, which was rapidly coming up, carried away her main-royal-mast, and the skill of her seamen was shown in the incredibly short time which elapsed before a new mast was aloft and rigged, and sail set again. By five she was again sweeping down on her adversaries with every prospect of a speedy engagement. At about this time the two English vessels passed within hail of each other, and the plan of battle was determined upon. Under all sail they hugged their luffs, and for forty-five minutes strove to gain the weather-gage. The superior sailing of the Constitution soon convinced Douglass of the futility of this effort, and shortening sail to fighting trim they waited for the approach of the Constitution now close to the weather quarter of the Cyane. Both the British vessels attempted in vain to fire guns from their stern ports to cripple the approaching foe. We learn from James that the Cyane could not so fire, as her after ports were cut for long guns, and her carronades could not be used. With the Levant it was found that the tiller could not be moved with the guns in position aft. There is no need of comment on such a state of affairs. It seems almost incredible that capable officers should have waited till the emergency was upon them before testing the capabilities of their gun-ports, but it is so said by James, and although his partisanship renders him a most prejudiced witness, we must credit his assertion in this case.

Something has been said as to the British ships waiting bravely for the enemy when escape was possible. Whilst I would not for an instant discredit the courage with which both the Cyane and Levant were fought, the simple fact remains that the Cyane had crowded sail to get away from the time she discovered the nature of the strange sail to windward. Upon communicating with the Levant both ships made all sail by the wind ;

and it was not until they saw that this effort was hopeless that they shortened sail for action, and hauling up their courses awaited bravely the issue which could not be avoided.

Both British vessels were now running through the water heading about North-West (the wind being about North-East), under easy canvas, and distant about one-half a cable length from each other. The *Levant* was ahead, and nearly due west from the *Cyane*. As was proper their heavier ship was nearer the foe, and prepared to stand the fiercest of the fire. The *Constitution* still under a press of canvas, though her studding-sails had been taken in, was trying with her bow chasers to reach the *Cyane*. Finding that the shot fell short, she desisted from firing, and swept down in utter silence on the enemy. It is worthy of note that though both British vessels cheered loudly as they fired their first broadsides, the American crew kept mute until the surrender of the *Levant*. Then they cheered, and not till then.

The fog and drizzle had rolled away, and at 6 P. M., when the *Constitution* hauled up her courses, and showed her colors, the enemy shook out his bunting, and the moonlight enabled the combatants to make each other out distinctly.

The loss of the royal-mast had frustrated Stewart's intention of attacking the enemy separately, but he did not hesitate to enter at once into action with both together.

At five minutes past six the *Constitution*, which now had both of the ships under her lee bow, opened fire from her long guns, she being then from 250 to 300 yards from the *Cyane*, which was nearest her.

This question of distance has been made much of by the English historians, who assert that the action was begun at a distance of three-quarters of a mile. The

sworn affidavits of the American officers is that the Constitution and Cyane were 250 yards apart. Apart from this evidence, the conclusive fact that both English vessels promptly responded with their starboard guns, directly traverses their contention as to distance, as it is incredible that they should have ventured their short carronades at such a range. Another pertinent fact is that the American marines, as sharp-shooters, were engaged from the beginning of the action. The Constitution now concentrated her fire on the Cyane, the heavier and nearer ship, and in a short time such dense volumes of smoke (all three of the vessels firing broadsides) had shrouded all of the ships in a cloud so dense in the heavy night air, as to completely hide both adversaries from the Constitution. She accordingly ceased firing, and drawing rapidly ahead under to'gallant-sails, ranged abeam of the foremost ship, and threw the full weight of her double shotted broadside, round shot, grape and canister against the Levant. The Levant staggered under the blow; but before another broadside could be delivered, the Cyane was observed luffing sharply so as to cross the Constitution's stern and deliver a raking fire. This was the crisis of the action. Had Stewart then erred the fate of the contest might well have been different. Both of his adversaries were courageous and skilful, and neither of them had as yet suffered a damage which would prevent manœuvring in unison.

But Stewart was equal to the occasion, and the admirable manner in which he extricated his ship from her trying position will always elicit the admiration of the seamen. With one ship on his lee bow he could not tack without being raked, he could not wear without fouling, and he could not stand on without being raked by the Cyane astern. Mindful of the danger, Captain Stewart let fly his head sheets, braced his after yards sharp aback,

and almost in an instant the Old Ironsides began to slip astern and away from the double dangers which beset her. Although in hot action with the *Levant* on her lee beam, her yards were swung with the precision of a tactical drill; and the grand old ship, famous for her "compactness," as James calls it, gathered sternboard, and before the enemy was aware, was once again alongside the *Cyane*, which was actually forced by the rapidity of the manœuvre to put her helm hard up to avoid collision. From this moment, though there were many hard blows to be given and taken, the result of the action was never for a moment in doubt. As the *Constitution* came abeam of the *Cyane* another double shotted broadside from her port battery tore its way through the hull and rigging of the *Cyane*. The enemy were now divided, and a divided squadron is far on the way to becoming a beaten one. The action with the *Cyane*, thus re-commenced, lasted until 6.25 P.M., both ships forging ahead slowly with only good steerage way. The *Levant*, which had shivered her main-topsail, now endeavored to spring her luff, and gain a raking position athwart the bows of the *Constitution*. To defeat this, Stewart at once filled his topsails, and bearing up slightly, shot ahead, and crossing the wake of the *Levant*, before the smoke of the last broadside had cleared away sufficiently for his enemy to observe his motions, poured his starboard battery in a raking fire into the *Levant's* stern. Before the *Levant* could recover, a second raking broadside tore through her decks. The *Levant* immediately bore up and made sail to leeward to escape. About this time a heavy shot from the *Cyane* ploughed through the *Constitution's* waist and killed two men. At this juncture the *Cyane* was seen to be wearing with the intention of raking the *Constitution* from forward. The helm of the *Constitution* was at once put hard up, and before the Englishmen could follow her

movements the Constitution shot across the Cyane's stern and poured in a raking broadside, from the same starboard battery which had just been used so effectually on the Levant. The Cyane, which was a short, handy ship, came by the wind on the port tack, and at once opened fire again with her port broadside. But the damage done her was too severe, and the overpowering weight of the Constitution's battery too overwhelming for the unequal contest to be continued, and at 6.50 the Cyane fired a lee gun and surrendered.

Over an hour was passed by the Constitution in transferring prisoners and taking possession of her prize. Shortly after 8 o'clock she filled away in pursuit of the Levant, which, making off to leeward, had improved the time to repair damages to hull and rigging. At 8.15, observing the Constitution coming down upon her, she made sail to to'gallant-sails and hauled by the wind on the starboard tack, and with colors set, stood towards her powerful enemy. James's explanation of this proceeding on the part of the Levant is that she was ignorant of the fate of her consort, and was standing back to her assistance. But even this is a scarcely tenable hypothesis, as all firing had ceased for over an hour, and the close proximity of the Cyane and Constitution must have apprised Douglass of the Levant that one of the two ships together had surrendered. He had himself seen the Cyane raked while wearing, and as he swept down to leeward must have noticed her disabled condition, as the Constitution swept down upon his consort for the concluding and conclusive broadside.

At 8 P.M., the Constitution, having repaired her slight damages, stood away for the Levant, and it was not until she was seen coming down before the wind, at 8.15, that Douglass, in the Levant, hauled his wind, set his to'gallant-sails, hoisted his colors, and pluckily awaited his enemy.

At 9.05 the ships swept by each other on opposing tacks, the Constitution being to windward, exchanging broadsides. Before the smoke cleared Stewart had put his helm hard up, and wearing short round, crossed the wake of the Levant, and raked her again. Upon this Douglass crowded all sail to escape, setting courses, and springing his luff. The Constitution came promptly to the wind, and boarding her tacks, made sail in pursuit. At 9.30 she opened with her bow chaser, aiming at the Levant's rigging. At 10 p.m. she had gained so far that she was preparing to open with her starboard broadside, when the Levant at once surrendered. Although this was the final act in the contest, the battle had been decided by the two raking broadsides delivered in the Levant's stern at 6.38, over three hours before. The last broadside was more like the *coup de grâce*, as the Levant was in no condition to fight longer.

Captain Douglass deserves all honor for his courageous defence till further conflict meant simply the slaughter of his crew without hope of success. It is not necessary to draw any melodramatic phrase about deserting his consort into the plain tale. The battle had been planned by him, and accepted and fought. The contest did not seem an unequal one, and, as he well knew, the previous year the Cyane alone had fought for over two hours successfully against a French 44-gun ship. Why then, aided by the Levant, should not the American frigate be worsted? The English captains had each attempted to rake the Constitution, and had Stewart not acted with quick decision, each of the efforts might have been crowned with success. But, as events shaped themselves, the Constitution was never raked, whilst the Cyane was raked once and the Levant three times. The tables of relative and actual losses show the execution wrought by these four deadly broadsides.

From beginning to end the action was loyally fought and stoutly contested. Gunnery alone did not win for the American, but his cool conception of the exigencies of each phase of the contest, and the quick execution of each manœuvre needed to give him the commanding position, were practically the elements which brought him victory.

I give here a table of the actual forces engaged:—

The Constitution carried thirty-one long 24-pounders, and twenty short 32-pounders, in all fifty-one guns, with actual weight of metal in broadside of 644 pounds, with a total of 451 officers and men, as shown by her muster-roll of February 19, now at the Treasury Department, Washington.

The Cyane was frigate built, and carried twenty-two 32-pound carronades on the main deck, and ten 18-pound carronades and two long 9-pounders on the spar deck, with a weight of metal in broadsides of 451 pounds. The officers and crew numbered 175.

The Levant mounted eighteen 32-pound carronades, two long 9-pounders, and one 12-pound carronade, making a total of 21 guns, with 313 pounds metal in a broadside. She had on board 138 all told.

#### COMPARATIVE FORCE AND LOSS.

		BROADSIDE WEIGHT	CREW	KILLED	WOUNDED	TOTAL
Constitution	51 guns	644 lbs.	451	4	10	14
Cyane and Levant	55 guns	754 lbs.	313	35	42	77

The relative force of the Constitution's battery at close quarters, and the battle was actually fought at distances within 300 yards, thus counting the Constitution as 100, the Cyane and Levant 116. In men, Constitution 100, Cyane and Levant 80. In losses, Constitution 3 per cent, Cyane and Levant 21 per cent.

As the greater part of the action was fought at ranges

between 250 and 300 yards, the shorter range guns of the British had full opportunity for execution.

Although James, with his customary prejudice, declares that the gunnery of the *Constitution* was poor, and the marksmanship decidedly inferior, the tables just quoted show that neither allegation is true, and the percentages of loss are overwhelmingly in favor of the American side.

It is conceded that in spite of the apparent advantage in weight of the British broadsides, the American's long guns were superior to the short carronades opposed to him, and it is further acknowledged that the heavier scantling of the *Constitution* prevented serious wounds in her hull. The fact that she was hulled thirteen times shows conclusively that the action was fought within range of the British guns. The glory of the achievement lies perhaps more in the complete and masterful manner by which the victory was gained than in the ultimate result. A similar action between the British *Avon* and *Rainbow*, both sloops of war, against the French 44-gun *Nereid*, had been inconclusive, both sides having claimed the victory, and no captures being made.

The *Constitution's* loss, as shown, was small, and the damage done her so trifling that the testimony of her officers is unanimous to the effect that at 1 A.M., three hours after the surrender of the *Levant*, she could have gone into action with an equal force.

Neither guns nor scantling had carried the day, and even the bravery exhibited had scarcely affected the result. Cool, clear-headed seamanship won the battle, and this all powerful factor was contributed by Captain Stewart.

From the position of the ships at the beginning of the action Stewart could easily have run across the stern of the *Cyane*, crippling her by raking, but he preferred the



weather-gage and an action with both ships. That his choice was a wise one, appears from his twice being enabled by the earlier clearing of the smoke from his windward position, to catch the movements of his foes whilst they were still enveloped in the drifting cloud of battle.

For fifteen minutes at the beginning of the action the Constitution was exposed to the broadsides of both vessels, and though she was so near that the splintering of the planking on the Levant could be distinctly heard, she sustained no material damage in hull or rigging.

As the seas were known to be swarming with British cruisers, the prizes were rapidly repaired, and by daylight all three ships were underway for the Cape Verde Islands. The Cyane had suffered more severely than the Levant in her rigging, every brace and bowline being carried away; and apart from the main and mizzen masts being in a tottering condition, every important spar was wounded, and she had ten shot holes between wind and water.

The really critical points in this remarkable battle were, —

First: the boldness of the Constitution's attack on what appeared in the misty weather to be two frigates. That this mistake was a natural one is confirmed by the English fleet off Porto Praya mistaking the Cyane and Levant, and entering them in the Leander's log book as "apparently frigates."

Second: the choice and holding of the weather-gage, the latter requiring cool, circumspect management when engaged with two ships, each handier than his own, and both eager to wrest this advantage from his grasp.

Third: the surpassing quickness with which the Constitution backed from her position, in hot action with the Levant, to again engage the Cyane, not only frustrating the attempt to stand across her wake, and rake, but prac-

tically separating the two vessels, and crippling the Cyane hopelessly.

Fourth: raking the *Levant*, as she shot ahead, and turning in time to rake the *Cyane*, which came up with the intention of securing a raking position.

Although virtually engaged with both of the ships until the surrender of the *Cyane*, Stewart never lost sight of either, and the cool precision of his movements contributed more to the success of the exploit than his gun or his gunners. The movements of the *Constitution* "were as brilliant as any recorded in naval annals."

Commemorated in prose and verse, the *Constitution* will always be a favorite of the American nation; and though other ships and other heroes have arisen in later wars, Stewart and the *Constitution* will never lose the laurels so skilfully gained. Though the *Levant* was recaptured by the British squadron at Porto Praya, the *Cyane* safely reached New York, and the colors of both the *Cyane* and *Levant* now hang from the walls of the gunnery room at the Naval Academy.

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